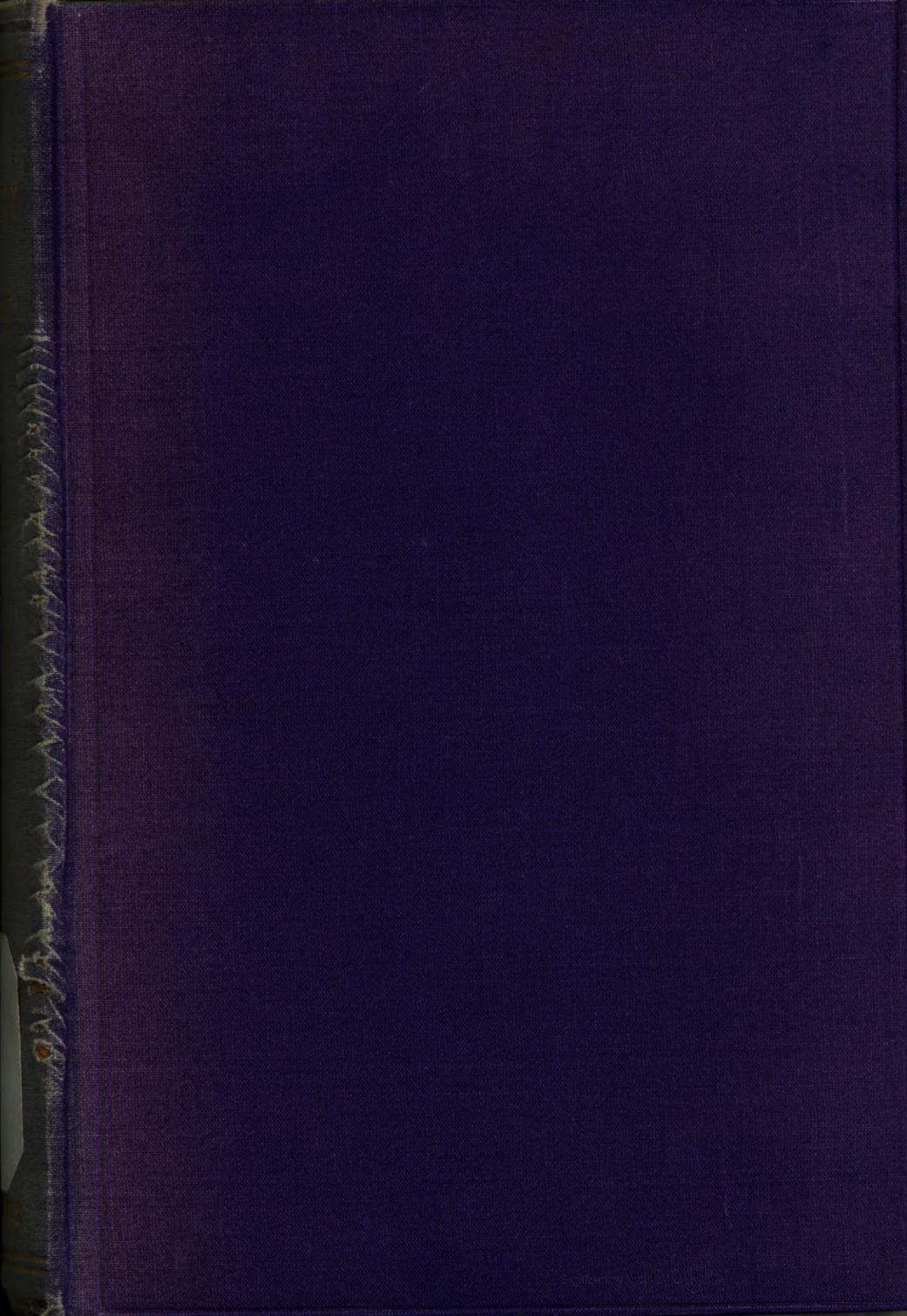

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THE PASSION OF CHRIST

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE
PRAYER BEFORE THE PASSION

OR OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION FOR
HIS PEOPLE

A Study Exegetical and Practical in the Seventeenth
Chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John.

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**THE
PASSION OF CHRIST**
A STUDY IN THE NARRATIVES, THE
CIRCUMSTANCES, AND SOME OF THE
DOCTRINES PERTAINING TO THE TRIAL
AND DEATH OF OUR DIVINE REDEEMER

BY THE
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PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is twofold: if possible, first, to add to the influences which make for the exaltation of the Cross; and, secondly, to support the right to individual freedom in the examination and adoption of conclusions which may be drawn therefrom. In carrying out this purpose, the writer has presented the historical evidence supporting the fact of Calvary; the characters concerned in the great event; the motives which led to it; the manner in which it was accomplished; some of the doctrines which have been derived from it; and the means whereby the benefits of Christ's devotion may be appropriated by the individual. It is assumed that in the regeneration either of the individual particularly or of the world generally, the work of Jesus Christ is of absolute and vital necessity; and that the culminating and supreme act of that work was the Sacrifice at Calvary.

But while in this study it is maintained that in the Passion of our Divine Redeemer lie the hope of humanity and the strength of the spiritual life, it is also held that views and opinions concerning the Passion may differ without endangering the fact

v

or the outcome of the fact. The fact of Calvary is no more touched by speculation or inference, than is a fact in Nature affected by the theories entertained concerning it. To state such a truism would be unnecessary were there not people who persist in confusing facts and opinions, so as to make it appear that the former depend on the latter. Sometimes more stress is laid on the opinion than on the fact. This is not intended to imply that views and opinions which have helped, and perhaps still help, to the appreciation of Christ's work and sacrifice are of no consequence, and may be regarded with indifference, or that the guidance of the Church, either as teacher or exemplar, may be heedlessly refused; but that in the Reconciliation God and man may meet, and be made one, even though on man's part there is no intellectual apprehension of the mystery of Redemption, or possibly a conception thereof which may be incorrect. In other words, doctrines, no matter how carefully or authoritatively devised, though by no means negligible, are not essential to salvation. Man may cross the bridge which spans the gulf between him and his heavenly Father without knowing the nature of the bridge.

The book, however, is not designed to disparage doctrines or theories, even though they have ceased to express the thought of the age, but, on the other hand, to be both conservative and constructive.

Some views one must needs have concerning a subject in which one is interested, and the nearer these views are to the truth so much more easily may the truth be ascertained. But the views themselves are not essential to the truth, and more frequently than otherwise they come from personal idiosyncrasies, rather than from abstract or general considerations; and therefore they need not be the same in every one. The views propounded herein may not stand the test of time or examination, but they may serve as helps to more exact and correct opinions. At all events, the arguments advanced are positive rather than negative; and if objections have been made to some conclusions, in every instance substitution has been commended.

In a study dealing with a subject which has engaged the thought of many scholars in many generations, hesitation is unavoidable, especially in those parts which touch upon events familiar to all readers of the New Testament, and those which concern the date, authorship, and construction of the Gospels. Much diversity exists on almost every point herein submitted to the reader; and instead of entering upon the vain attempt to reconcile conflicting opinions, the writer has endeavoured simply to state such conclusions or such hypotheses as seemed to him best supported, either by the evidence or the argument. Of course this is only individual opinion; and the reader must himself judge of its worth. But that

may be said of the work of all who have ventured into the consideration of these subjects.

But whatever dispute may disturb the theological or historical study of the Passion, there can be next to none in the examination and inculcation of its devotional and practical aspects. These necessarily outweigh in importance all else; as is evident if we remember that the chief thought running through the Prayer before the Passion is holiness. Christ pleads for the sanctification of His disciples. In the Passion itself He creates the means whereby freedom from sin and the principle of holiness may be secured.

Following the example of former ages, the present age is struggling to find a remedy for its ills, which after all said and done are the result of sin. The tendency to make philanthropy a substitute for religion, rather than ancillary to religion, has led to the deepening of the distinction between sins wrought against God and sins wrought against man. But though God is lost sight of, man has become of more consequence; and more than ever do seriously minded people reflect upon the wrongs done by man to his fellows, either in neglecting their interests and welfare, or in consenting to their hardships, unhappiness, and disabilities. Dives sinned in that he refused to hear the cry of Lazarus; and in no less degree they sin who allow the poor to be downtrodden or forgotten. It is well that conscience

should thus exert itself; though it should not be forgotten that wrong done to one's neighbour is also wrong done to God.

God may forgive sins done against Him; but the poor have no voice wherewith to forgive the wrongs done against them. Moreover all wrongdoing tends to lower and weaken the character of the wrongdoer. If, for instance, he has indulged in the worship of money, which is the root of all evil, and never more manifestly so than in these days, he has brought himself to a degradation as deep as that to which any other course of sin could bring him, probably into more deplorable misery. Nor can any forgiveness of self help him. Indeed, forgiveness is of no avail unless it free the individual from his sin.

In this study, among other things, will be shown the part that the love of money had in the persecution of the Nazarene. Other elements were there too, but it is doubtful if alone they could have carried the matter to its sad extremity. And humanly speaking, Christ suffered both because He was a despised man and had none to defend Him, and also because He would adjust the wrongs of His day.

One wishes that the fact of sin and its consequences was more generally recognized than it is; but much of the unrest which affects society comes from the determination on the part of the many who do accept the fact to drive away the evil and

expand the good. Readjustment is going on in every department or phase of life : theologically as well as otherwise. But whether it be that the change proceeds more slowly and heavily in the religious sphere, so that, religion being behindhand, in the political, economic, and scientific realms, society is attempting its stupendous task without its aid, or that there is in modern movements a spirit essentially antagonistic to Christianity, so that religion and civilization can no longer work together, is not clear. Only this is evident, that in the effort towards a better world, too often Christ and His work are forgotten.

Perhaps the time is not distant when they who long for that better world will realize that there is only one real and lasting remedy for the conditions they complain of. That remedy may have many modes or manners of application ; but the remedy itself remains ever the same. Hence the effort made in this book to bring the reader into the very heart of Christianity.

The writer sends out these pages in the hope, not only that they may help some to understand better the glad tidings of God to man, but also, and much more, that they may further all who read them to that spiritual and intellectual comfort and confidence which only Christ can give.

ST. JAMES'S RECTORY, CHICAGO,
Christmas Eve, 1911.

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THE PASSION OF CHRIST

THE contemplation of Gethsemane and Calvary occasions many questions, some of which force themselves upon our consideration. If, conscious both of its limitations and of the greatness of the subject, and perhaps affected by hereditary or acquired reverence, Reason hesitates to look upon the mystery, and much more to enquire into its meaning, Faith demands that Reason shall search out and indicate the object of its devotion. There can be no intelligent exercise of belief until there be some conception and some assurance of what is to be believed. Even Love wonders and questions ; and the deeper the love, the more anxious it becomes to know and to prove the truth.

Reason is urged by Faith and Love to exert itself.

In a study of this kind, venturing as it were into the realm of the Divine, Reason, like an arrow shot into the air, or light flashed over the waters, can go but a little

Though Reason be neither infallible nor infinitival, yet it is given for use.

A

2 THE PASSION OF CHRIST

way. When it has reached the farthest point possible and has exhausted its powers, it will acknowledge that the greater part of the problem remains unsolved. But, as did the ancient navigators, if it may not cross the seas, it will work along the shores, hoping that it may find some compensation for its efforts. Even though it fails of its object, and finds itself obliged to wait until more knowledge shall come, yet Reason must cling to its purpose. That purpose is, to detect error and discover truth, to piece together and interpret inferences and suggestions, to compel prejudice to give way to judgement, and to point out foundations upon which Faith may rest. Whatever else may happen, "let Reason," the judicious Hooker says, "teach impossibility in anything, and the Will of man doth let it go; a thing impossible it doth not affect, the impossibility thereof being manifest."

Reason is of
first necessity.

We say this of Reason, not because we dare hope by its aid to elucidate mysteries or to settle disputes which have perplexed theologians, philosophers, and other masters of thought these many centuries, but because, as a matter of fact, without Reason there can be no Religion. If it be true that Reason and Authority are the two brightest lights of the

world, it is also true that Authority depends upon Reason for its right to exist. Before a man can accept Authority, no matter how incompetent he may be to argue upon the matters submitted to him by Authority, he will satisfy himself, and thereby exercise his Reason, that the Authority is worthy of his obedience. As an intelligent being, he can do no less. God has given him the power of reflection, and if that power be not usually numbered with Faith, Hope, and Charity, it is, not that it is less divine, but because those virtues have no force or meaning unless some conclusion has been reached as to the purpose of their exercise. As we know them, those virtues do not exist in irrational creatures.

There are people so well satisfied in their "faith" as to have no liking for enquiry into the reasons for that faith, and so readily shocked at the proposition of enquiry as to doubt the wisdom and honesty of all who are not as they are. Before the sorrows and sufferings of Christ, in which Love manifests itself so divinely and so infinitely as to be removed from the possibilities of human experience, the enquirer, knowing his own vital dependence upon the work therein wrought, is indeed subdued with reverence and humility. But he who is unmoved by the thought of his

"Is not reason the Scripture of God, which He hath written in every man's heart?"

Acquiescence without enquiry not to be commended.

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age, and is indifferent to the religious aspirations and spiritual anxieties of the times, can scarcely be said to have a living faith or a receptive mind. He fails to realize that if the Holy Spirit is to lead men into all truth, there must be on the part of those who desire to be led a readiness to listen and to follow, to give up even cherished notions when they fail to stand examination, and to admit that means must needs be used by God to bring about His purposes. And though it is probable that to the questions which in these days try the strength and press into the life of Christianity, and especially upon the subject with which this book is concerned, no answers can be found entirely, or even approximately satisfactory, yet to avoid them is to suggest an unwholesome fear of consequences, and to create prejudices which may prevent all progress. Moreover, an hypothesis, if it be practical, even if it be not conclusive, may serve as a step towards the truth, and, in this instance at least, enable the enquirer to gain a better, perhaps a true, appreciation of the Sacrifice of that Lord to whom the Church looks for redemption, and for whose glory she was called into being.

To the man who has set Christianity aside, not because of its intellectual and practical

difficulties, but because of his own indolence, indifference, or incapacity to look into a religion, which if it be worth having necessarily involves some study to ascertain its teaching, and some effort to adopt its precepts, no problems connected with the Passion of Jesus Christ will appear of the slightest consequence. If he heard of them, he would waive them off without consideration, as things in which he had no concern, and upon which, as a matter of course, he could neither waste his time nor exert his attention. This is as easy a way of getting rid of difficulties as credulity itself affords. For one to dismiss a problem because he so rejects it, or so accepts it, as to refuse to examine it, is to credit one's self with injustice and folly.

Pride springs out of ignorance and indolence.

But, affected more or less by the changes in religious thought and feeling, and earnestly anxious to know the truth, not from idle curiosity or a desire to contradict, there are multitudes of devout and loving Christians who would not only meditate upon the wonders of the Cross, and worship Him who died thereon, but, with no less sincerity and devotion, would also enquire into the necessity and meaning in the economy of the universe of such a Sacrifice as that offered by the Son of God at Calvary. For some reason or other,

Earnestness desires enquiry.

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knowing that human wisdom and ingenuity, though exhaustively put forth, are not unerring, and suspecting that language has dealt strangely with matters upon which in their hearts most Christian people agree, even though they may not accurately express their agreement, such believers cannot accept all that has been advanced on that subject, even by those in authority; and yet, with fervent love they believe in their Lord, and are satisfied that He died for their salvation. These are they who stand before the Cross, pleading not so much that God may help their unbelief, as that He may direct their faith. Such are not seeking to defend their hopes and aspirations, but are endeavouring to learn how they may best set those hopes, and enliven those aspirations, in true relation to the Saviour they worship. They would consecrate their Reason, not by disusing it, but by bringing it as nearly as possible to the Divine, feeling assured that God will have respect unto their effort, and, when its strength is gone, will give them sweet content. Perhaps, too, they may find that the joy of the Cross lies beyond the doctrine, and is to be reached only through devotion.

Even though the believer in Christ is satisfied that Christianity will accomplish its

purpose, and that the Kingdom set up on earth by Christ is everlasting, yet he recognizes that changes are taking place in the conceptions and interpretations of that Religion and of that Kingdom. The Faith was indeed once and for all delivered to the Saints, and the Faith remains eternally the same, but the definitions and explanations of the Faith are for ever changing. No two generations apprehend or consider it exactly alike. It has new meanings and fresh applications for each succeeding age. And the man who endeavours to think of the Religion and the Church of Jesus Christ as the men of the past thought of it, will not only entangle himself in a work impossible of satisfaction, but he will lose sight of the life of that which he would preserve. Last year's leaves are dead and are swept away by the winds, but in the new year the tree puts forth leaves as green and useful as they once were. The tree remains, though autumns and winters come and take away its glory; and in the joyous springtime the tree gains fresh beauty.

Time necessarily works changes.

Nor should the fact be forgotten that the past was not always free from mistakes and wrong conclusions. Too often Christianity has been regarded as a thing to be defended and protected, rather than as a religion that

Misconceptions of the past.

8 THE PASSION OF CHRIST

by its very possession of truth could take care of itself, and do valiant service on its own behalf. Accordingly, it has been set as it were within a castle or fortress, supposed to be more or less impregnable, built with thick and massive walls, overshadowed by mighty towers, and surrounded by deep, broad moats and extensive labyrinthine outworks. That this care indicates the love the creed-builders and ritual-masters had for Christianity is unquestionably true, even though it suggests a lack of faith in its own inherent vitality ; but as the years have gone on, at least the outworks upon which they devoted so much labour and material, and which they fondly hoped were built for all time, have been attacked, not only by the spirit which has arisen from new methods of thought, but also by the ravages of their own weakness. Indeed, in some instances the bulwarks have given way, though the pressure from outside has been but slight, their decay having reduced whatever strength they once had ; in other instances, persistent attacks have revealed them inadequate as defences to the fortress in which the truth of Christianity had been set. In vain do they who still declare a trust in these outworks affirm their necessity as safeguards of the Faith. In vain do they condemn

those who would destroy them, and either build new defences in their place more able to resist modern unbelief, or, better still, show their confidence in the power of Christianity to live and to conquer, not in the seclusion of the stronghold, but out in the world's battlefield, where truth and error are fighting their Armageddon. There, in the open arena, men use the sword, and seek not the shelter of the wall.

It is not a matter of reproach that there are men who struggle to think as they thought who devised the definitions and explanations which for these hundreds of years have been, first, considered as effective, and then treated with a reverence scarcely less than that given to the central fact itself. They who differ from them, for the more part do so with regret; and, if they love the past and appreciate honest and earnest endeavour to save from destruction that which appeared to be endangered, they respect their feelings as much as they recognize their scholarship and sincerity. Nor are they without followers. Multitudes of true and devout disciples of Jesus of Nazareth agree with them.

But the age is revealing multitudes of others, no less true and devout believers in Christ, who, from no fault or even desire of theirs,

Conservatism
not to be
dishonoured;

but progress
must be
recognized.

but driven by intellectual necessity, have lost faith in the outworks. Yet they have retained faith in Him about whom Christianity is really concerned. Indeed, it is possible that their faith in Him is all the deeper and stronger because they have relieved themselves of the necessity of accepting and interpreting a mass of explanations, which, however useful they may once have been, no longer explain anything. They do not, for instance, reject or question the facts set forth in the Nicene Creed, but they hold themselves free to use or to set aside the doctrines or opinions which from time to time have been evolved concerning those facts, as such doctrines or opinions may commend themselves purely on their own merits. It is true, that they who take this position may not be able to accept the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession, or the Heidelberg Catechism, as they are sometimes interpreted, to say nothing of the Decrees of the Council of Trent, which need no interpretation; but with a faith no less real than that of those who do accept the more or less popular interpretation of those revered documents, they believe in the Christ of the New Testament and of the Nicene Creed. Because they have little care, though possibly some respect,

for the outworks, and think that Christianity would be all the mightier were it released from the fortress in which it has been so long guarded, if not imprisoned, they do not wish to be considered as heterodox, or as in any sense opposed to the fact of Christ or to the essential doctrines concerning Him.

It should be remembered, that the processes by which the philosophers, theologians, and scholars of old time reached the conclusions which have been handed down were the same as those employed by the men of to-day. Antiquity, however venerable, must not blind us to the fact, that no matter what the rank, or the office, or the number of those who enact articles of faith, even with them Reason must be the dominant and decisive force. And if this be so, there is nothing to lead us to suppose that Reason in the Twentieth Century is any the less potent than it has been at any time since man received the gift of thought. It is difficult to see why scholarship and reflection should be considered less trustworthy in these days than they were in remote centuries. And if we accept, revise, or reject conclusions arrived at in this age, have we not an equal right and an equal ability to do the same with those of any other age?

Reason has
not lost any of
its powers.

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Dr. Thomas Jackson, President of Corpus Christi, Oxford, and Dean of Peterborough, in the early part of the seventeenth century,—according to Southey, “the most valuable of all our English divines,” and to Pusey “one of the best and greatest minds our Church has nurtured,”—in one of his *Commentaries on the Apostles' Creed*, says:—
“There is no ingenuous man, especially of meaner gifts, but will in heart and conscience acknowledge many, both ancient and modern, for far more excellent scholars than himself: and yet be fully persuaded in conscience, that in sundry particulars he hath the truth on his side which they oppugn; and the true sense of God's Spirit in some points wherein they have erred, or were ignorant.”

See his
*Eternal Truth
of Scripture:*
ed. 1653,
p. 267.

p. 268.

And the same divine goes on to say:
“Dissension amongst the learned should rather move all sober Christians to disclaim all infallible authority of men than to rely upon any.”

Experience
the foundation
of Christianity.

This does not mean that Truth is vague or that positive convictions are impossible. After all, the basis upon which Christianity rests, and from which it becomes a working force, will be found not to be the documents or the doctrines, though they may be of

inestimable worth, and may have received the sanction of the Church, but individual experience. Philip answers Nathanael's question concerning the Nazarene, by the invitation "Come and see." Unless there be this experimental knowledge Christianity remains a mere abstract and lifeless theory. But realizing what Christ has been to the individual, and what He has done for him, it is not difficult to discover some assurances of what Christ is in Himself, and of the work which He has accomplished.

Sometimes, with the intention of belittling the claims of Christianity, and thereby of destroying their force, comparison is made between the stupendous, and indeed inconceivable, magnitude of that creation in which this earth of ours is as a fleck of dust fluttering amid myriads of worlds, set in spaces and moving in periods so vast that metaphors and figures can scarcely suggest, much less describe, and an event which at the time concerned only a few peasants, and which happened in a country remote from the centre, not only of the universe, but even of human power and thought. In the life of Rome, to say nothing of the empire over which Rome held sway, and the other realms beyond its bounds, Judea was of small con-

In comparison with the magnitude and importance of other things, Christianity is not insignificant.

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sequence ; of none at all to the suns and stars of heaven ; and as Christ was dying, humanity and the universe went on without let or hindrance. What effect could an event apparently so obscure and insignificant have either upon the worlds beyond the clouds or upon the lands beyond the seas ? And yet, though we know nothing of the changes that event may have wrought in other worlds, simply because we know next to nothing of those other worlds, not so much as safely to conjecture if they are inhabited, or, should they be inhabited, if sin be there, we do know something of what happened in the world in which we live. The annalists and historians of the day may not have recorded the crucifixion of Christ, or so much as heard of it ; life in the court at Rome and in the schools at Athens may have gone on, for many a year, without knowing that a Galilean had been put to death at Jerusalem ; but the time came when all folk realized that this crucifixion had set in motion a series of ideas, principles, and acts, which affected the life of man and changed the aspect of the world. According to some objectors, Christianity may have failed in its proofs and purposes, but none can deny, that, for good or for ill, it

has exerted the mightiest influence known in human experience.

And though the story of Calvary is apt to be considered as of small importance in times so busy, perplexing, and full as these which have come upon us, when the struggle either to hold one's own or to win wealth and independence is so fierce, and business enterprise has become so vast, aggressive, and absorbing, and the readjustment of social conditions command the close attention of the world, everything connected with the common life being on a scale more magnificent than hitherto has ever been known, yet a little reflection would show the error, if not the danger, of the tendency. It does not follow that in life, either as it belongs to the individual or to the community, importance pertains more to the great and clamorous things than to the quiet and small things. No argument lies against Christianity in its being overlooked. Because hitherto no thought or attention has been given to a subject, by no means implies its insignificance. It may be, as this fact of atonement is, the most important thing in the world, though by some people, even by a vast majority, it is neglected. The nurture and education of the mind and body are of great consequence, but hardly

They err who overlook the significance of Christianity.

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more so than the care and development of the spiritual faculties. A man may fill his barns and warehouses, and starve his soul ; but he is not sure that his soul is of less worth than the body for which he has laid up his possessions. The Bible may remain hidden in the library, but it may prove to be the most valuable book therein ; and none can safely conclude that religion is dead, and the teaching of the New Testament out of date, because they may chance to be no longer popular, or seem insignificant beside worldly affairs.

The Sacrifice
of Christ a
necessity.

The importance and significance of the Sacrifice are implied in its necessity. Speculation concerning the nature of that necessity could only be useful were God to lay open to the scrutiny of man the design and method of His government, and were man capable of investigating thoroughly Divine wisdom and power. If we knew fully the character and effects of sin, we should be better able to consider why such a Sacrifice was demanded or allowed. Unfortunately the age is becoming less and less aware of the fact of sin. Evils, which formerly were recognized as the outcome of sin, are now ascribed to conditions in which sin is assumed to have no part. No man can be held responsible for

his heredity, and not entirely for his environment. Whoever may be to blame for such, he is innocent; and if they who caused him ill were themselves ignorant or helpless, then they, too, are free from guilt. If there be no sin, there is no necessity, so far as we can see, for expiation or forgiveness. As a matter of fact, however, the horror of sin and the dread of its consequences are not realized so much by those who indulge in sin, as by those who are struggling from sin towards holiness. It is not necessary to practise sin in order to know it, or to discern its outcome. Christ knew, as no one else has ever known, the depths of iniquity into which man can fall, yet He did not sin. The nearer man gets to God, the more he fears the peril and pollution of sin; and the stronger this fear, and the deeper the realization that he is as a brand plucked from the burning, the less does he wonder at the Sacrifice involved. The Sacrifice was indeed great, but the danger and damage were also great; and if men lose life to save life, and, to keep their loved ones from threatening evil, make mighty and costly efforts, considering the means as nought in the accomplishment of the end, it is not surprising that to rescue us from eternal sin a Sacrifice

B

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such as that at Calvary should have been made.

The Sacrifice
an evidence of
Divine love.
Rom. v. 8 ;
viii. 32.

Nor should it be forgotten, that, in not sparing His own Son, but delivering Him up for us all, God commended and manifested His love towards the children of earth. Objectors have denied the love of the Father for the Lord Jesus, in the assumption that love could not have decreed suffering; but they forget that it was love for man which occasioned the determination on the part of the Father, and the consent on the part of Christ, to make the Sacrifice, and by suffering to prevent further suffering. "God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." If we may use the expression, it was love beside love, perhaps love against love, trying to outstrip love; and the splendour of the Divine compassion and affection was shown in offering for the weak and sinful Him who was dearer to Deity than all else, being, in truth, one in essence and will with the Eternal Father. The love of God was shown in the price paid for man's redemption.

Was there any
other way
possible for
the salvation
of man?

In view, however, of all that Christ passed through, the agony, misery, isolation, and death, some have wondered why God did not exercise His almighty power and unquestion-

able prerogative, and, out of pity for the gentle and sinless Sufferer, save man in some other way. None can question that He might have done so, for all things are possible unto Him; but to enquire into the reasons for His will and design is as fruitless as it is presumptuous. Such was His will, undoubtedly based on wisdom and love; and gladly Christ came to do that will. Why it should have been so decreed, we cannot discover, nor can we make the attempt without coming perilously near constituting ourselves judges of Him before whose throne we kneel as suppliants for mercy. We dare not even infer that this being the greatest thing God did, nothing less being great enough to save man, there was nothing further that He could do. We cannot possibly find out. An ancient poet did indeed describe man as made in the image of God; but that does not justify us in assuming that from our thoughts and emotions we can know God's thoughts and emotions. No one man can adequately express the thoughts and emotions of humanity at large, or understand and explain the variety of temperament, character, and impulse which exists, not only in society, but also in the individual. Much less can humanity itself, even could it think as with one mind and

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speak as with one voice, comprehend and make known the Infinite and Eternal.

Extravagant
speculations.

The realization of the fact that the thoughts of God are past finding out, may lead one to question the wisdom of attempting to define the nature of the Sacrifice of Christ ; but even should we fail, as to some extent inevitably we cannot help failing, to discover the entire mystery of that Sacrifice, yet we may learn enough to enable us, either to avoid conclusions which are untenable, or to discern God's purpose sufficiently to benefit by His grace and love. Only in humility, however, may we enquire, and not assuming that finite mind can ever understand the Deity. No one has ever been rash enough to suppose such knowledge possible ; and yet sometimes theologians have dealt with this subject of Calvary, far from irreverently to be sure, but with a freedom and an assumption which seem not altogether warranted. Thus, for instance, some have argued that nothing could appease the wrath of God, or satisfy the requirements of His justice, but the shedding of blood ; and in the shedding of blood they consider both act and material to be literal and physical. It has been taken for granted that God demands propitiation, that He will not give life until

His anger has been subdued by death, that He has made a law which He cannot unmake, and that the exercise of mercy or forgiveness depends upon the pains of the Cross. Ages have come and gone, Christianity itself has been introduced into the world, and yet, in some teaching, there has been allowed to remain the conception of an avenging and a sanguinary Being, to whom the smoke of burning sacrifice is acceptable, and whose glory comes out of the agonies of helpless victims. It has even been supposed, that the Redemption represented a transaction between God and Satan, whereby, on the payment of the ransom, Christ Jesus, Satan releases the captive souls of men. Some have spoken of the Atonement as a "quenching of the flames of the Father's wrath in the blood of His Son," and as a "wresting of the sword of divine vengeance from the Father's hand."

Fancies such as these are as unhappy and misleading as they are unworthy both of those who invented them, and also of Him whom they are supposed to describe. Not for one moment should they be supposed to have a rightful place in the teaching of Christianity. They have done incalculable ill, alienating rather than attracting, putting a stumbling-block in the way of seekers after God, causing

No theory of the Sacrifice satisfactory which endangers man's conception of God as a spiritual and gracious Being.

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unnecessary wonderment and unanswerable sorrow, and creating much unbelief. They indeed receive some support from certain hymns and books of devotion, oftentimes more popular than discreet, but there is no evidence either that God has revealed Himself in them, or that they are helpful in bringing men nearer God. They have no other foundation than the conjectures and dreams of a type of mind which finds satisfaction in conceptions of the Deity singular to it, and repellent to all other types. The colouring of these fancies comes from violent twistings and indefensible interpretations of Scripture, the confusion of figure and metaphor with fact, and the supposition that the greater the difficulty, the more praiseworthy the faith. Nor are such opinions strengthened though their advocates claim inspiration, and advance them in the name of the Lord.

Happily time has wrought some salutary changes; and in these days one feels that words such as the following, which were uttered in Edinburgh some three hundred years since, and which for many generations expressed a popular form of theology, would repel rather than win, especially if their meaning were well weighed:—

“In this work of man's redemption there

was no collusion betwixt the Father and the Son. But the Father laying him before him, as the object of his wrath by reason of our sins, the burdens whereof he took upon him, he spareth him not, he striketh at him, and woundeth him deep, and to the heart with the weapons of his wrath and judgement, and he leaveth him not until his justice be satisfied to the full, he forbeareth him not, nor suffereth him to get up his head, till he hath paid the last farthing of the debt, and say upon the Cross, consummatum est !”

Peter Hewat's
*Three Excellent points of
Christian Doctrine :*
Edinburgh
1621; in
Sermon II.

It is true, that from very early times man has held the doctrine of propitiation, meaning thereby that for the forgiveness of sin, and to induce the Deity to relax His law and overlook the offence, he must offer some compensation and satisfaction. As with his thank-offering, so with his sacrifice of expiation, though the oblation were unworthy of God, yet man hoped that God would see beyond the expression the emotion and thought of his soul. Preferable to all else, for propitiation the sacrifice should be of blood. Simple observation taught that the life of the flesh is in the blood. It was the element in which inhered the spirit uniting man to God: none might drink it, or use it profanely. Between man and man, as between God and

Primitive man
believed
Propitiation to
be necessary.

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man, the blood-relation was of all relations the strongest. Blood was shed to effect it ; and when man by sin had estranged himself from God, he believed that blood, containing both mystery and potency, life itself, should be offered—the blood should make an atonement for the sin. The consciousness of sin pressed heavily upon many primitive races ; and the fear of God transcended all other terrors. To still the one and obtain pardon for the other, man built his altar and kindled his fire. He could not offer himself, so he shed the blood of his strongest and best loved son or daughter, and believed that in devoting life and breaking his own heart he had won peace with God. The theory of substitution obtained wider application. Instead of his child, he laid upon the burning wood, the choicest of his sheep or oxen. In doing this, he both suffered the loss of property, and also expressed his conviction that life could be had only through death, and that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin.

Primitive ideas
inherited by
the Israelites.

Israel inherited these early opinions and practices, and much besides, from the Babylonians and Assyrians, as they in their turn had been taught them by older races. Millenniums before Abraham ascended the hill for

the purpose of offering Isaac, the sighs of victims and the smoke of sacrifices were carried on the winds into the skies, or towards the mountains, where God abode in silence broken only by the thunderstorm, and in anger which showed itself in outbursts of famine, pestilence, and war. The Levitical law and ritual were undoubtedly largely derivative ; whatever originality they may have had, lying not so much in their precepts, as in the development and adaptation of those precepts to local conditions. If ancient and universal consent are worth anything, some support may be found in it for the belief in propitiation. The idea came neither from revelation nor from instinct, but from thought and reflection. It was that which man himself demanded of such as transgressed his peace or his rights. He reasoned from himself to God. Compensation must be made.

But if a belief or custom be founded upon a misunderstanding or a wrong conception, no matter how wisely or for how long it may be held, or how closely it enters into a nation's life and how abundantly it be illustrated by a nation's poetry, teaching, and practice, the error out of which it sprang vitiates it from first to last. It is difficult, if not impossible, to discover how far modern notions have

Antiquity of
itself not a
safe guide.

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been read into primitive or ancient practices. There may have been in those far-off times much confusion of thought as to the meaning of propitiation. Perhaps no clear, definite idea existed. Some may have regarded sacrifice as gross, material, and objective; others may have supposed that the efficacy of the rite lay not in the blood shed, but in the will and devotion of him who by his act showed his penitence and his readiness to give the best he had. In this latter case, sacrifice became sacramental—an outward sign of an inward grace; and the intention was not so much to appease and pacify the Almighty, to avert His anger from the sacrificer to the thing sacrificed, so that the thing sacrificed should bear the penalty and guilt, but to please God and to satisfy Him that His child was sorry for wrong-doing, and desired to be at peace with Him. But whatever the origin or the meaning of propitiation, the conviction is unavoidable, that the writers of the Old Testament intended to teach its necessity, and, with some remarkable exceptions, appear to have maintained its materialistic character. They held that the sacrifice of blood was required to avert the wrath of God, and to satisfy His justice. Even as the blood on the doorposts of the Israelites in Egypt secured the safety of

the firstborn, so the blood on the horns of the altar obtained pardon and reconciliation.

That their interpretation was not beyond dispute is shown, as we shall see, by the vigorous utterances made against it by some of the prophets. Than these prophets, it would not be easy to prove that the advocates of the materialistic theory of propitiation had superior knowledge, a clearer apprehension of the relations of God and man, or stronger and surer powers of thought and reflection. At the same time, modern opinion is so far out of touch with ancient beliefs, that the mere possibility that we know these things better than did the men of old time is not conclusive. We are doing much as they did: interpreting mystery by our own sense of the fitness of things; and our sense of the fitness of things may be wide of the mark. In such case, the chances would not necessarily be against that consensus of belief in the power of blood to appease the wrath of God which has come down from remote ages, and which has been examined and approved by many generations. Before we can speak absolutely and certainly, we should be satisfied that we have some facts to work upon which they had not.

The objection to "blood-sacrifice" arises from personal feeling.

Yet it must be admitted, as we have sug-

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No one exempt
from the spirit
of the age.

gested already, that in these later times, and for two or three centuries at least, there has been a growing reluctance to accept this ancient theory of propitiation. That the theory may be sustained by Sacred Scripture does not remove the feeling that such is scarcely of God. Few men can for long keep themselves aloof from their age. Even should they attempt to do so, they drift unconsciously into its tendencies, and, while repudiating its phraseology, unwittingly afford hospitality to its opinions. Formerly it was supposed that the new ideas and ways of looking at things came from the perversity of some one or more men of genius; and in days when novelty and originality were more dreaded than at present, such geniuses were usually committed to exile or to the flames. But all that men of learning can do is to bring to light facts which already exist independently of them, or to express thoughts which somehow or other either are in, or are bordering on, others men's minds. In the light which comes to relieve the mariner of doubt or the traveller of distress, no thought is given to him who caused the light, or to the material or vessel used for the light. And the world's thinkers pass unheeded in the world's thought. They served their purpose, but the

truth they gave was no more their creation than the light is the creation of the man who kindled it. No one knows how an age comes to think and to feel differently from other ages. Genius may tell it that such and such is the right way of looking at things, but genius cannot make it think or feel so. If the age does not agree with genius, no argument will make it agree. And beyond all question, this age has found it difficult, if not impossible, to think of God, in this matter of propitiation, as others have thought, or to feel as they felt that the Deity could be appeased only by the shedding of blood. It is not that a genius has arisen to convince men of this ; or that certain schools of thought have been teaching it. The opposition to the new thought and new feeling is as vigorous and active, though not so widespread, as is the effort to maintain them ; but it fails to convince. Possibly the age is wrong, and a future age will reverse its judgement. But the stream is irresistible, and the age perforce must go with it. Whether it be right or whether it be wrong, the fact remains, that the greater number of Christian people, in considering the subject, find it impossible to rest satisfied with any theory of propitiation which reduces the Sacrifice of Christ to a

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payment of blood to His Father for the souls of men.

Personal feeling forces a conclusion, even though it be questionable.

Uncertainty cannot be removed from this aspect of the problem. Therefore some may think it rash either to affirm or to deny the doctrine of propitiation, and may hold it to be as unwarrantable for us to suppose that God does not require it, as it has been for others to hold that God does require it. Yet we feel that there is something faulty in the theory, and in many of the deductions drawn from it. We do not, for instance, see, as some have held, how mercy and justice were reconciled in Christ suffering punishment in man's stead, the innocent thus being afflicted for sins He had not done, and the guilty freed from the penalty due him. To visit the consequences of sin upon One who had done no sin seems as unjust, as it is difficult to believe that God ordained the necessity and means of propitiating Himself. One hesitates to ascribe such a device to God. We cannot think it came from revelation.

Does the knowledge of the Deity come from Revelation or from Reason?

It is not only probable, but it may be taken as certain, that the Deity has vouchsafed to man some revelation of Himself and of His will, but where the Revelation begins and man's Reason ends is impossible to discover ;

nor how far Divine inspiration may enter into and aid human reflection and imagination. To that which is of God belongs infallibility ; to that which is of man fallibility : and the more uncertain man is of himself, the more earnestly will he claim for his utterances a Divine authority. Rather than trust to that intelligence by which he has reached a conclusion, and which conclusion he has brought himself to believe necessary to his soul's health, for fear it shall be disputed by his fellows, he will disparage his own powers and declare himself to be no more than an instrument in the hand of the Almighty, a mere spokesman of the Divine and Eternal. It is possible that such is indeed the fact ; but it is also possible that God has ordained that the process whereby truth, even concerning Himself, shall be discovered is analogous to the process by which the secrets and uses of the forces of nature are found out. He who ventures to make known to his fellows the mysteries of the Divine nature and will, after all may be obliged to use those same mental qualities which are necessary in other departments of research and enquiry. Undoubtedly there are men with powers transcending those of most men, poets, for instance, geniuses who are able to peer into the darkness which so

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grossly envelops human life, and therein discover truths that strengthen and beauties that delight. Equally true is it that prophets rise up, who not only are able to gather and express in appropriate language the thoughts and aspirations which dwell vaguely and elusively in the mind of their age, but who also are able to discern, and also to describe, glimpses and fragments of that realm of life and activity, which, though beyond the reach of the senses, is nevertheless real. But the powers by which such men make things invisible to be seen and things inaudible to be heard, may be powers belonging naturally to man, common to all in some degree, and therefore not differing in kind in them, though exercised in such full strength ; or they may be powers directly and peculiarly bestowed upon them by the Deity. No one can tell : not even the person in whom they operate.

Reason must
examine and
decide : even
on matters
said to be of
Divine
Revelation.

This, again, involves an element of uncertainty. To distinguish which part is Divine and which human, which unerring and which subject to the possibility of mistake, involves a wisdom and knowledge not given to man. It is, however, a problem which sooner or later man is bound to attack. Inadequate as may be its resources, Reason will sit upon the throne of judgement. It

will examine the evidence, and venture a conclusion. There is no other way of approaching truth: for even Revelation is addressed to the mind, and of itself requires some exercise of choice. And they who permit Reason to do this are not without precedent. It may be doubted, for instance, if the writers of the Old Testament had any intention of exempting their work from the criticism of those to whom it was addressed. To have done so would have betokened a want of confidence in the writings they were setting forth. Oftentimes they assumed that they were speaking in the name and under the guidance of the Almighty, but as a consequence they did not forbid dispute on that assumption. On the contrary, they seem to have desired investigation of their authority. The fact that signs and wonders might come to pass was not held to be certain evidence that the prophet or dreamer of dreams had given a true message. It was even taught that a lying spirit might come from the Lord, and that prophets might speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord, and that, rather than serious and responsible leaders, they might become light and treacherous persons. With such possi-

Deut. xiii. 1-5.

1 Kings xxii. 22.

Jer. xxiii. 16.

Zeph. iii. 4.

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bilities, the hearers and readers of prophecies were urged to examine carefully the words presented to them.

Old Testament writers limited in knowledge, and not free from the possibility of mistake.

Probably the best and most influential of Israel's teachers and seers recognized limitations to the fulness and accuracy of their knowledge. At all events there were limitations. To refer again to the sacrifices of propitiation, nothing is laid down in the Levitical Law as of more certain efficacy than such sacrifices. Minute rules are given, and declared to be of Divine command, and of lasting obligation, as to the qualities and preparation of the beasts to be slain as offerings to an offended Deity. The principle underlying the whole system was that blood maketh atonement for the soul. Based on this assumption, the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement were ordered, whereby with solemn and suggestive rites, and carrying the blood of sacrifice into the Holy of Holies, the high priest made "an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year." Among other things, burnt offering was appointed for the sins of ignorance, and, for instance, as an expiation of the folly of Job's friends; and, on the other hand, as an extraordinary punishment, it was declared that the iniquity of Eli's house

Lev. xvii. 11.

Lev. xvi.

Num. xv. 30.

Job xlii. 8

1 Sam. iii. 14.

should not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. In the Old Testament nothing is pronounced as of more stringent obligation, or of greater authority, than these theories and injunctions. And yet, almost with scorn, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sweeps aside the whole conception, and thereby repudiates and condemns a principle which authorities of ancient time had declared to be of Divine revelation, and once and for all exposes the limitations of their knowledge: "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Heb. x. 4.

In this utterance he reiterated a thought, which, as we have already intimated, had entered the mind of some teachers and poets long before his day. For example, in the Fortieth Psalm, David, on his way to the throne, is represented as saying, "Sacrifice, and meat offering, thou wouldest not; but mine ears hast thou opened; burnt offerings, and sacrifice for sin, hast thou not required: Then said I, 'Lo, I am come; in the roll of the book it is prescribed to me: I delight to do thy pleasure, O my God; and thy law is in my inmost parts.'" In his denunciation of Saul, Samuel has a like thought: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings Some Old Testament writers declared against the theory of "Blood-sacrifices." Ps. xl. 6. 1 Sam. xv. 22.

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and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, following the Septuagint, takes the words of David as the language of Christ, at His coming into the world; and among other things he declares the futility of the ancient systems: "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." So Isaiah had declared, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." Jeremiah goes so far as to question the Levitical tradition itself: "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you."

These passages may be interpreted, not as indicative of the limitations of the lawgivers

and prophets, even when they claimed to make known the mind of God, but as evidence that the people, instead of making their sacrifices in sincerity, had become formal. The sacrifice meant nothing but compliance with an ancient custom. Wrong-doing went on as ever. Therefore God repudiated a rite which had no moral influence on those who practised it. Possibly this is a fair interpretation; but if so, it implies that the essence of sacrifice is not in the shedding of blood, but in the virtue of him who makes the offering. Nothing, however, is said of the mental or moral qualities of the sacrificer; and the doctrine that God looked upon the heart and not upon the altar, seems to have been unknown. A greater and more profound truth is reached by Micah, who, breaking through the bounds which held back other Hebrew writers, clearly sets aside ritual sacrifices altogether: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the

The virtue of sacrifice lies not in the blood but in the purpose.

Micah vi. 6-8.

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Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? ”

The
persistency
of the theory
of Blood-
sacrifice
greater than
its importance.

It would be unnecessary to dwell upon these questions of propitiation, and to suggest that some of the writers of the Old Testament, who insist upon the offering of blood, had conceptions of God far from consonant with His attributes of justice and holiness, were it not, as we have seen, that those ancient theories are still made to do service as explanatory of the Sacrifice of Christ. If we look more closely into the subject, we may find that it is possible to believe in and to benefit by His Sacrifice without bringing these theories into view at all, indeed, without deciding either for or against them. Possibly, after all, they may be safely passed by.

Types not
discovered
beforehand.

It may be said, as indeed the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews argues, that these ancient sacrifices were figures and foreshadowings of the true Sacrifice ; and of that there need be little doubt. But it is even more certain that the legislators who enacted them, and the people who observed them, had no suspicion or intimation whatever that they were types of a Sacrifice yet to come. There is no intimation in the old documents that they did not effect that which

they were declared to accomplish. A man gave his bullock or his ram with the assurance that it was pleasing to the Deity and would atone for his own sin. There is no suggestion of symbolism. That is an after-thought, and, as it happens, comes in after centuries of obedience to the law laid down by the elders of Israel.

Nor does the theory of progressive revelation remove the uncertainty as to the authority of the Old Testament writers. They who advance that theory have still to explain, why a course of generations, or even one generation, or one individual for that matter, should be deceived for the benefit of generations yet unborn. Perhaps we ourselves are being kept in shadows and uncertainties for the good of remote ages. Their advantage may come out of wrong done to us. We can understand that knowledge acquired by man does develop and advance; but we do not know how to reconcile with truth and justice the revelation at one time of the necessity of propitiation by blood, and at another of the uselessness of any such sacrifice. That man should in one age suppose sacrifice of this kind to be required, and in another age should think otherwise, is not surprising. He is sure to think according to his attainments and sur-

Theory of
progressive
revelation not
free from
objection.

roundings. But it is not clear that God is responsible for the contradiction of opinion, or that either opinion should be ascribed rather to revelation than to human reason.

Where so much
doubt exists
definite
conclusions
are unsafe.

But, though the utterances of the men of old cannot be regarded as infallible, and should be held subject to examination, judgement must not be allowed to give place to prejudice or to assumption. We have been thinking exclusively of Sacred Scripture as setting forth, notwithstanding the protests of some of its writers, a theory of sacrifice and propitiation which has been forced into Christian teaching, and which at the present time is questioned, if not denied, and has been the occasion of much stumbling and offence. But no matter what the point under consideration—and it might have been other than the one we have had before us—though criticism be admissible, and the difficulty of deciding the relation between Revelation and Reason be admitted, yet to assume certainty for our opinion merely upon our own fancy or reflection is to fall into the error we deplore. He would be rash indeed who would set aside an utterance, say, of a prophet such as Isaiah, on the ground that it could not be true, or that he knew better. Leaving out of sight the possibility of Divine revelation, unless he

can show that Isaiah's sources of information were at fault, or that Isaiah lacked the gifts of the poet or the prophet, the objector were wiser to remain silent. He may doubt, but he may not affirm. Nor, apart from all question of Divine authority, can it be maintained that St. Paul, for instance, was not thoroughly capable of interpreting Christianity, and setting forth accurately the doctrines of the Gospel. Unless we dismiss as visionary and impossible the religion St. Paul held and taught, we must needs allow him to be an authority upon that religion. He knew whereof he spoke. If he failed, it is scarcely to be hoped that any later critic or scholar will remedy his failure. So with other sacred writers. But when they contradict one another, a theory solemnly and emphatically set forth by one writer being set aside as solemnly and emphatically by another, and a wholly different theory set in its stead, the authority of both becomes dubious and open to dispute. All we would imply is, that they, while possibly, and if possibly, then doubtfully, receiving Divine revelations, were more certainly using their own reason; and though their reason may have been stronger and nearer the truth than commonly happens, and therefore should be regarded with re-

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verence, yet it was subject to the infirmities which belong to all things human.

The Sacrifice of Christ must needs benefit man and affect God.

"Imputation."

But admitting these theories of propitiation to be unsatisfactory and speculative, it is not to be inferred that the Sacrifice of Christ was not intended to affect the relations between God and man. It may not be an expiation of sin, or a vindication of justice, in the sense that some have thought, being influenced by ancient beliefs or practices, but it does change the conditions on which man may obtain forgiveness and eternal life. We shall not find that change explained, or the old theories of propitiation made more acceptable, by the doctrine of imputation, a doctrine unknown in the Church before the sixteenth century, whereby it is taught that man's sin is imputed to Christ and Christ's righteousness is imputed to man. To reckon man to be righteous when he is unrighteous, and to hold Christ to be sinful when He is innocent, introduces an unreality which must be as abhorrent to God as it is useless to man. The term "forensic righteousness," necessary perhaps in human affairs, can have no meaning in God's dealings with man. To Him every mystery of sin and every secret of motive are open. He can make no mistake.

Unlike the prisoner before an earthly judge, the sinner at His tribunal cannot hope to escape justice by some one else assuming his crime, or, by a chance verdict, to be freed from guilt. Righteousness with God must be real and essential; nor with Him can there be any transference of virtues or sins. So gross a fiction may be dismissed. Vicarious punishment is as unjust as vicarious salvation is unavailing.

Perhaps we may the readier appreciate the effect of the Sacrifice of Christ upon God if we first consider it as it concerns man. The word "reconciliation" is sometimes used to describe the changed relationship brought about by that Sacrifice between God and man. In the second of the Thirty-Nine Articles, borrowed from the Augsburg Confession of 1530, it is said that Christ truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile His Father to us,—an expression not to be found in Sacred Scripture, and by some thought to ascribe unworthy passions to the Deity. On the other hand, St. Paul says that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and also that "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Twice again the Apostle speaks of the Godward aspect of the reconciliation: de-

"Reconciliation":
καταλλαγή.

2 Cor. v. 19.

Rom. v. 10.

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Eph. ii. 16.

claring, in one instance, that Christ, having brought Jew and Gentile together, reconciled both unto God in one body by the Cross; and, in the other, that Christ having made peace through the blood of His Cross, the Father was pleased by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. The Apostle's words are sometimes taken to mean that the enmity which the reconciliation removed was on man's side, and not on God's; but this is assuming, first, that the antagonism was between God and man personally, rather than because of the holiness in the One and the sin in the other; and, secondly, that in reconciliation only one party in the estrangement should be considered.

"Atonement."

The English word "atonement," a setting "at one" of two persons at variance, came into use in the sixteenth century. Its etymology is evident; and the substantive appears in the Authorized Version, though not the verb. It has the same meaning as "reconciliation," and is sometimes used to translate various forms of a Hebrew root meaning to cover or to hide, as certain ritual acts were supposed to remove from the sight of God things which were offensive to Him. Thus sacrifice is spoken of as effecting an atonement. It removed from the sacrificer

the feeling that by his sins he was out of peace with God, and also, it was hoped, it brought God to think kindlier of the man who had wronged Him.

God desires nothing for us but our good. He is love, and no wandering from Him can destroy or weaken His affection for us. Therefore God cannot but hate all that makes for our ill. If sin robs us of that which makes us acceptable and pleasing to God, sin necessarily provokes the wrath and condemnation of God; and as long as man clings to that which separates and estranges him from God, so long does man incur the displeasure of God. Not that the wrath or anger of God means mere blind rage or mere personal resentment, which may have in them the nature of sin, and are therefore impossible to God, but rather rightful and moral indignation at the sight of wilful wrong-doing, that repulsiveness which naturally possesses a pure and holy being when brought into relation with uncleanness. This indignation manifests itself not only in the condemnation of wickedness, but also in withdrawing from the evil-doer those graces and joys which ensue from sonship, the restraining of Divine mercies, and in denying him either favour or recognition; and this, not from arbitrary determination,

Sin the cause
of the variance
between God
and man.

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but because such blessings are incongruous and would be stifled, or at least misused, by sin. The sinner is a son of God to be ashamed of. In his filth he cannot come near God, and God cannot touch him.

The cause of estrangement must be removed.

Sin, then, has a twofold effect : one, as regards ourselves ; the other, as regards God. It sets God and man against each other. As it strengthens itself it widens more and more the gulf between us and our heavenly Father. So long as we continue in sin we harden ourselves against holiness, and holiness from its very nature can have no agreement with sin. Sacrifices, intended as a compensation to God or as a concession to holiness, cannot remove sin. No observances will purify a man if he be at heart selfish, proud, or unclean ; or make him acceptable to God. Nothing can make reconciliation or atonement but the giving up of sin, and that means a death unto sin. True, the wages of sin is death ; and if man remains in sin he dies unto God, and then as a dead thing passes out of the operations of Divine mercy. If, however, he dies unto sin, he may live unto God. By this, of course, is not meant physical death. There is no regenerating or cleansing efficacy in such. Dying *unto* sin is altogether different from dying *in* sin. One of the most awful utterances of Christ was

made to some Pharisees, "Ye shall die in your sins." To die in sin is to carry the alienation between the sinner and God defiantly into an existence where everything depends upon the character formed in the present.

Unlike physical death, the death unto sin implies an act. It means positively and determinedly driving out of life that which alienates God from us and keeps us from God. Man is so far gone from original righteousness, that it has become easier for him to remain in sin than to remove himself from it. Experience teaches him that of himself he cannot put to death the sin which is working death in him. Though he assents to the law of righteousness, he finds a force within him warring against his will and bringing him into a captivity from which he cannot free himself. The desire may be ever so earnest, but it is unavailing. Intentions, however good, do not make him clean. He is powerless. Atonement or reconciliation is impossible ; and if on his side, also on God's side. Holiness cannot make terms with that which is contrary and antagonistic to its nature.

Here, then, is the necessity of Christ's Sacrifice : not a sacrifice to pacify the Deity, but a sacrifice to save man from a condition otherwise helpless and hopeless. He offers

John viii. 24.

The Helplessness of Man.

Rom. vii.
15-25.

In His death unto sin Christ gives life to man.

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Himself to do for humanity that which humanity cannot do for itself. He gives Himself, not as *a* man, but as *the* Man, the representative of the whole race, unto death,—not physical death, but the death unto sin.

Rom. vi. 10.

"In that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." From His Incarnation the whole life of Christ was a death unto sin. He resisted temptation, denied Himself, accepted hunger and thirst, persecution and tribulation, rather than touch that which is wrong. Sin tried its might against Him; the powers of the kingdom of darkness sought His downfall. Failing in all else, at last sin brought Him to the Cross, where, if anywhere, His defeat might be expected. But even in death He remained dead unto sin. The Man had conquered, both for Himself and for humanity.

Christ is the representative Man, and is not a substitute for man.

In this Sacrifice, culminating at Calvary, and there receiving its greatest glory, Christ is not to be regarded as a substitute for man, or as bearing the penalty or punishment due to those who have sinned. Some have thought that physical death is the outcome of sin, and that if sin had not affected him man would have lived for ever. But physical death follows a law of nature, wise and beneficent, and denotes a change which comes sooner or

later to all created things. Since the Crucifixion, men have been gathered to their fathers as were the ancients. Christ did not save us from that destiny. Nor did He pass into "eternal death," for then had He never risen again into life; and, were it possible, to substitute such as He is for such as we are would be to reward virtue with consequences which sin only can produce. For eternal death is eternal sin: remaining in sin for ever.

Physical death, however, had within it darkness and terror. A fear greater than all other fears possessed man when he thought of passing alone into the unseen and unknown world, where face to face with God he should realize the evil he had wrought against Him and hear the sentence of rejection. Death appeared as a mystery—a cloud-encircled, storm-driven sea, dark and unexplored, across which into the blinding mists the soul separated from its fellows drifted helpless to its doom. In death man had no friend. Worse than that, the power of death, its sting as the ancient figure describes it, was sin. Man was going into a hostile realm, and sin held him. In destroying the power of sin, Christ took away the sting. He was to save His people from their sin. The death which is the outcome of sin is not the separation of body and soul, but the sepa-

Christ saves man, not from death, but from the sting of death.

D

ration of God and man, that alienation from God and inability to turn to holiness and to love Him above all else. By His death unto sin Christ raises us up from that spiritual death, and saves us, not from the consequences or penalties of sin, but from sin itself. Even forgiveness does not imply that there will be no results from wrong-doing. Christ does not take upon Himself those results, but He redeems and ransoms us from sin itself. In that on behalf of humanity He died unto sin, He is the sponsor or surety that they who attach themselves to Him, and thus avail themselves of His death, shall likewise die unto sin. "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Heb. vii. 22 :
ἐγγυος.

Rom. vi. 6.

Christ's ransom a claim upon our service.

The price or ransom which loosens us from the bondage of sin is not to be thought of as a consideration paid to an owner for the transfer of a slave, but as the cost, namely of a life, whereby we are freed from death and made capable of holiness. Nor does redemption mean compensation paid to Him who has been wronged, so that He may let the guilty go free, but service done to save from an evil condition one who cannot save himself. Christ is our Redeemer, and His blood is the ransom given for our redemption

in that His death unto sin delivers us from death, and makes it possible for us to live unto God. As our Redeemer He demands our service. He has bought us, not, we repeat, as for nearly a thousand years till the time of St. Anselm the Church generally thought, and as some men still think, either from Satan or from God, but by rescuing us out of sin. In return for what He did for us, we should use to His glory and honour the power and freedom He wrought for us. "We are buried with him by baptism *into death*: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The conclusion is inevitable: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Rom. vi. 4.

Col. iii. 1.

Such a conception of the Sacrifice of Christ removes from the word "propitiation" the meaning attached to it by those who kept in mind the primitive idea of an avenging God and the necessity of appeasing His wrath. It runs counter to the supposition that rather than sin producing its own consequences, God Himself punishes those who violate His law, and, if He punishes, can refrain from punishing as He may choose. In none of

A theory which justifies the use of the term "Propitiation":
ἱλασμος.

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the six instances in the New Testament in which the word of which it is a translation occurs does this idea appear. The only time it is recorded as used by our Lord it is rendered by the word "merciful"—"God be propitiated to me a sinner": and here there can be no reference in any sense to Christ, either as the Propitiator or the Propitiation. St. Paul uses the expression once: speaking of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, he adds, "whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to show his righteousness, because of the passing over of sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." Here the Apostle employs the word in the sense of "demonstration": to make known the righteousness of God by His blood,—that is to say, as we contend, by His death unto sin. As the sacrifice burning upon the altar set forth the consciousness of sin on the part of the penitent, so did the act of Christ in dying unto sin display and make known the righteousness and holiness of God. The death pleaded to man to come back to his Father, and exhibited to him the fact that God is ever faithful and

Luke xviii. 13.

Rom. iii. 25.

just. In this sense, borrowing the figure from the demonstration upon the altar, Christ may well be called a "propitiation."

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is spoken of as "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." The Authorized Version renders the word "reconciliation," though both the original and the context show that the writer had the old ritual of sacrifice in mind. There is nothing, however, to lead us to suppose that the writer used the word in the sense of an expiation made to God to alleviate or remove His wrath, or to influence Him to show grace. Nor yet in another place, where in describing the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat, he uses for "mercy-seat" the word "propitiation." The same may be said of the two uses of the word in the First Epistle of St. John.

For those whom it represents, an army in its triumphs on the battle-field effects a new relation between them and their foes. An ambassador is sent to accomplish things which shall be for the benefit of his country. And ever and anon, a people oppressed by a foreign race, or enslaved by local conditions, is freed by some leader, who perhaps meet-

Other uses of the word in the New Testament support this theory.
Heb. ii. 17.

Heb. ix. 5.

1 John ii. 2 ;
iv. 10.

Christ suffers and dies for us, so that we may live unto God.

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ing his death, yet by his death saves his people and inspires them to stronger defence and nobler life. These services, done by others than by those benefited, involve sacrifice, and the sacrifice is made only to change conditions. Christ is indeed a propitiation for our sins, in that He is the One who came into the fray, took our side, defeated the powers of darkness, and upon our accepting the fruits of His victory enables us to recover ourselves, so that henceforth we may live unto God. He offers Himself upon the altar of sacrifice on behalf of all men, and in bearing our sins and iniquities, our griefs and sorrows, thus sharing our common lot, the burden of infirmity under which man had wearily and vainly struggled, displays powers for righteousness in humanity, long since hidden, if ever before suspected, and by His Death opens the way for us to escape from death. That God is gratified and pleased by His Sacrifice none can doubt, but with all reverence we venture to think that the ground of the pleasure is rather in the work Christ thereby did for man, His perseverance in holiness as man unto the end, than in His sufferings and the pouring out of His blood.

Isa. liii. 4, 5 ;
1 Pet. ii. 24.

Christ the
Mediator.

If, in thus effecting between God and man reconciliation and atonement, Christ may be

spoken of as a Propitiation, so may He be called a "Mediator," the One standing in the midst, and so intervening as to draw God and man together. Not only by His teaching, works, and prayers does He come between us and our heavenly Father, to induce us to do the right thing and to secure for us blessings from God, but especially by His Sacrifice, in which both to God and to man He shows the fulness of His love. He is more than Intercessor, in that He has done that which entitles Him to plead for our forgiveness and for our obedience. For His sake, in view of His giving up Himself, God is propitious to us and we are drawn to God. "There is one God, and one mediator 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. between God and men, the man Christ Jesus : who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

That the view of the Sacrifice of Christ here suggested is more tenable than any of the other theories evolved since men began to think upon the subject can be only an individual opinion. If a theory entirely satisfactory and universally acceptable could be proposed, the problem would prove itself of easy solution. The impossibility of agreement is shown in the never-ceasing controversy; and until God Himself shall unfold the mystery,

Must not expect agreement on any theory.

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reason will have to possess itself in charity and patience.

The Sacrifice complete in every sense and in every particular.

Prayer of Consecration in Celebration of Holy Communion.

Art. XXXI.

But whatever theory be thought the best, every theory recognizes the complete efficacy and finished purpose of the Sacrifice. He who suffered death upon the Cross for our redemption "made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." However variously they interpret the terms, all Christians hold that "the Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone." And none doubts that the means whereby we avail ourselves of the benefit of the Sacrifice of Christ is faith,—a faith which leads us to give ourselves to incorporation with Him in Baptism and Holy Communion, and to serve Him with that devotion and obedience which He by grace has made possible. Nor does any one doubt that before we can exercise that faith, and thereby appropriate the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ, there must be repentance,—the crucifying of self with Christ that we may live with Him. Some one has said: "There is a Hell named in our Creed,

and a Heaven, and the Hell comes before ; if we look not into the first, we shall never live in the second."

Though the Passion of our Divine Redeemer consisted in His death unto sin, it is not to be implied that His physical sufferings had no purpose, and were of no avail. Man being what he is, it is possible that nothing can make such an impression upon him as the thought and sight of suffering. Few people are so obdurate as to be unmoved in the presence of pain or sorrow, or when face to face with death ; and such people are regarded as inhuman, and undeserving of consideration. Naturally and normally the human heart listens to the cry of distress. Even on the battle-field he who refuses, at the plea for mercy, to spare his defeated foe is held to have disgraced his strength, and to have shamed his victory. Christ does not, indeed, ask for pity. That would suggest that He longed for relief from the struggle He had undertaken, and was not as other men are when doing valiant deeds. Nevertheless pity is awakened in those who look upon one in agony ; and more than pity. Heroism, especially when it involves the loss of life, and possibly appears as failure, appeals to humanity with a certainty of re-

The Physical Sufferings of Christ create helpful sympathies.

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sponse before all other virtues. Thermopylæ and Balaclava will stir men's souls till the end of time ; and still more deeply, the story of those who for the faith they held have dared to die alone. It was well said in early days, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. Ignatius and Polycarp, Irenæus and Cyprian, and later men such as Savonarola, Latimer, and Hannington, did not die in vain. Less distinguished than they, though none the less true and brave, through the ages, unknown to fame and unnoticed by history, come not only the noble army who have received the red martyrdom, but also the still greater multitude who have suffered, perhaps physical ills, perhaps the wrongs of others, through the many days, quietly and uncomplainingly, till the end has found them unsullied as the light into which they are called. These are they who by suffering have left influences for good, lasting and far-reaching.

The appeal to
the human
heart made by
His sufferings.

Christ was a sufferer, and as such He appeals to the sympathies of the world. Even should we eliminate the thought of Atonement, we cannot avoid recognizing the fact that He died for us. Reduce the fact to its lowest possible significance, and say that He died simply to teach us how to die, and, in the most stupendous experience coming to human

beings, held fast to His purpose, we have an example for our guidance and an inspiration for our courage. Move on from this stage of appreciation, and allow that He died to save His people from their sin, say, in the sense of teaching them the horrible degradation of sin, and by his steadfast resistance, consistent conduct, and honest acceptance of the conditions of human life, to show them how to overcome evil, and then realize what sin did for Him in His great tribulation, and His sufferings and death will have a still stronger and more tender appeal.

There were those in early times, some have supposed even in the time of the Apostles, who denied the reality of Christ's sufferings. "While the Apostles were still surviving," says St. Jerome, "while Christ's blood was still fresh in Judea, the Lord's body was asserted to be but a phantasm." They did not, indeed, go to the extreme of denying the fact of suffering, for, if the senses are to be trusted, every human being has evidence enough within himself to the contrary; nor did they consider that Christ came into the world to abolish pain, knowing that under present conditions pain has a beneficent purpose, both as an indication of disease, and also as a means of grace. But such was their conception of

The heresy of
Docetism.

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Christ, believing Him to be not only the brightest Emanation of Deity, but God Himself, and such their opinion of the impurity of matter and the essential evil of the human body, that they thought it impossible for imperfection to be joined with perfection, human death to Divine life, the finite to the infinite, or pain with heavenly subsistence. As the Ebionites refused to accept the fact of the pre-existence and Divinity of the Son of God, so these Docetæ set aside altogether the fact of His humanity. In their belief, Christ only *seemed* or *appeared* to have a body; and therefore all that happened to Him physically only seemed to have happened. Thus the Crucifixion was nothing more than an appearance; neither death nor resurrection really took place. They refused to admit that the Blessed Virgin contributed of her nature or substance to the Child born, not of her, but through her. Some among them, the Marcionites for instance, came to hold that Christ was not born at all, either in reality or in appearance, but that on the banks of the Jordan, during the ministrations of the Baptist, He descended in the form, but not in the substance, of man. There was for Him, then, no possibility of suffering. Gethsemane and Calvary were mere phantasmata. His giving up of life was

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as unreal as His taking it again, and into His experience no agony or glory of either body or mind ever came.

Such a doctrine at once reduced the story of the Gospel to a fiction, destroyed the truth of the Atonement, and made the sacrifice and suffering of Christ an absurdity. It not only removed Christ from His oneness with humanity, but it also laid Him open to the imputation of pretending to be what He was not, and to do what He did not. No wonder is it that the Church repudiated with indignation such a travesty of the Gospel and such a reproach to the honour of her Lord. Had this error prevailed, to say nothing of other errors which sprang from it, Christianity would have lost itself in the endless and hopeless jungles of Oriental mysticism and philosophy. Undoubtedly definitions are dangerous, sometimes actively damaging, but it was her misfortune, and not her desire, that led the Church to attempt them. Just as laws are made to restrain or remedy some evil already existing, and were it not for the evil probably would never have been thought of, so error occasioned the declaration of truth, and heresy forced the creation of creeds.

But, though, from the necessities of the evidence, we may not doubt the reality of

The reality of the Passion must be insisted on.

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Christ's physical sufferings not beyond human experience.

Christ's sufferings, and, indeed, must see in those sufferings the strongest appeal possible to human sympathy and interest, if not the Sacrifice by which alone we may hope to be freed from sin and admitted into purity and holiness, we ought not to allow the notion that the bodily pains of Christ were greater or more severe than any which have ever, or can ever, come to the lot of man. They could not have been infinite, for He could suffer only in His human nature, and human nature even in Him was only finite. No purpose is served by exaggeration; nor by dwelling upon particulars that distress, and in some instances repel, people of acute sensibilities. The suffering was bad enough; the death was cruel enough. But other men have suffered and have died, as cruelly and as bitterly as did our Blessed Lord. If we imagine His bodily pain to have been beyond all human experience, then we sever Him from that humanity which we are taught He has in common with us. He felt the pressure of the thorns and the piercing of the nails keenly, but not more keenly than other martyrs have felt the fall of the sword or the heat of the flame. And even when we speak of His mental anguish, we must be careful not to suppose that His mind possessed

a greater capacity for grief than is possible to humanity. We do not, indeed, depreciate the pain that distressed Him; but we must remember that in respect to His physical nature He suffers as His brethren suffer, and that the Sacrifice at Calvary is the Sacrifice of Man and not of God.

So again, in the fact that He suffered undeservedly, not from anything wrong that He had done, but because of the wrong wrought by others, He is not separated from that experience common to the human race. Unhappily, the innocent suffer for the guilty,—not only *because* of the guilty, that is from evils done by such, but also in the *stead of* or for the *benefit of* the guilty,—oftentimes, apparently suffering more than do the guilty themselves; once in a while with redemptive force, that is to say, their suffering may bring the one for whom they suffer to repentance and amendment, but more frequently, so far as man can see, with no beneficial result whatever. This is the saddest side of vicarious suffering; and some have thought that Christ was spared it, in that His Sacrifice, sufficient for the whole world, was efficient, if not for all men, then for all who would accept His salvation. But there is no sure reason for holding that He was

Vicarious
suffering
oftentimes
unavailing.

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Heb. iv. 15. exempt from the lot which comes to the multitude of those who suffer for the wrongdoings of others. He was in all points tried like as we are. His tears soften hearts no readier than do our tears; and His pains, like our pains, oftentimes are left unheeded.

Christ rejected by Israel. We have proof of this in His rejection by Israel. Sixty or seventy years after His Crucifixion, if we may so approximate the date of the Fourth Gospel, St. John writes, John i. 11; cf. *τα ἴδια ἐπὶ τοῖς ἴδιοις*. "He came unto his own (inheritance), and his own (people) received him not." Probably the Evangelist is speaking of the days of Christ's ministry on earth, and not of what had happened since; and, so far as men could see, not many were drawn to Him before He was lifted up from the earth. John xii. 32. He called, but of those to whom He spoke few answered. For the greater part the men of His day passed unnoticed, or with slight attention, His gracious words and helpful works, His strong and pure character, His devotion to the country of His birth and to its people, and the correspondence of His career with the career of the Messiah depicted by the prophets. Untaught by centuries of faith, and therefore unable to appreciate or to idealise Him as His followers

now do, they saw only a poor, wandering teacher from the North,—without either comeliness or beauty that they should desire Him. Some people, however, did consider Him and His claims, and instead of merely neglecting Him, deliberately rejected and condemned Him.

Isa. liii. 2.

Possibly they who thus positively rejected Him were not so many in number as is commonly supposed. Brought about by the rulers and spokesmen of Israel, the Temple officials, the recognized teachers, and the leaders of the sects into which Judaism had divided itself, the rejection can scarcely be said to have been the act of the people at large. The people indeed shared in the consequences of the act of these men, and the act to some extent was done on their behalf; but they themselves were allowed no voice. To what extent the tidings of the Teacher reached the dull ears and stolid minds of the masses in either city or country we do not know; but in every walk of life were not a few who became interested in Him, and not only heard Him gladly, but some among them availed themselves of His benevolence and looked to Him as the Restorer of the Kingdom.

Yet the guilt probably belongs only to the leaders.

This may have happened more frequently

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Christ had
many friends.

in Galilee, where He was better known than in Judea ; but, on the other hand, rather than peasants and fishermen, in Judea He attracted men such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, and families such as that of Lazarus at Bethany. Nor should it be forgotten, that only under the persuasion of the priests and elders did the multitude demand the life of Bar-abbas, and clamour for the execution of Jesus. The haste with which Christ was hurried to trial and to death, suggests the fear His enemies had that the people would rally to His support and insist upon His freedom. Certainly, when the Sacrifice and Mission of Christ had been attested by the Resurrection, and were therefore better understood, the people came into the Church in large numbers. Thousands were converted on the Day of Pentecost. Great companies of the priests believed. And vast as was the gathering in of the Gentiles, yet for some generations the Hebrew adherents to Christianity were numerous enough practically to control the Church. These considerations make it doubtful if the common supposition that Israel rejected Christ should be left without qualification ; and further lead one to suspect, that when Christianity made its final break with Judaism it had taken out of Israel most that

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was worth having, its real life and the best of its sons and daughters.

Be this as it may, there is no question that for the most part the leaders of thought and the holders of office in Israel did reject Christ, and were powerful enough to bring Him to death. Some of the chief rulers believed, but, says St. John, "because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." The efforts their fellows made and the force they used indicate both the position of Christ in popular esteem and the virility of His teaching, and also their own fear and bitterness. Insignificance and weakness occasion no such opposition. With that sense of responsibility which is apt to pervade hierarchies, and societies of learned men, perhaps rightly so, they regarded themselves as the protectors and spokesmen of the people, and in the name and for the sake of Israel, they repudiated and persecuted the Prophet of Nazareth.

Fear of Christ led to His persecution.

John xii. 42.

Passing from further consideration of the sorrow brought to our Lord by this rejection, we would enquire into the causes of that rejection, for causes more or less reasonable

Unreasonable to suppose that the leaders of Israel wilfully blinded themselves.

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there must have been. Some authorities, feeling that the miracles of Christ and the prophecies concerning Him afford conclusive evidence of His claims, have held that they who rejected Christ determinedly set themselves against the evidence. It is assumed that these leaders had examined the doctrine and deeds of our Lord, and though convinced that they proved His Messiahship, yet selfish motives led them to refuse Him recognition. Selfish motives did actuate His enemies, but the charge that enquiry had been made into His claims, resulting in a conviction of their truth, does not seem to accord either with justice or with fact.

"Miracles,"
even if
authentic,
afford insuffi-
cient evidence.

In ages when wonders were expected, magic was practised, and enquiry rarely or never made into causes, miracles, even such as were wrought by Christ, had no such effect upon people's minds as they would have were they to happen in times when the more exceptional the phenomenon the more thorough the investigation, and when general belief runs against the probability, if not the possibility, of such. Many of Christ's miracles were questioned, not a few doubted, and some denied; but, excepting the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the healing of the man blind from his birth, and the feeding of the five

thousand, none of them occasioned more than passing surprise. Other prophets had been wonder-workers. Moses himself had rivals in the magicians of Egypt, and men remembered the extraordinary things done by Elijah and Elisha. That this Teacher from Galilee should show signs and work marvels was to be looked for. Such as He were supposed to know secrets that were hid from the multitude. His knowledge and skill showed that He was a teacher come from God, but they were no proof that He was the Messiah. The raising of Lazarus from the dead convinced many of the Jews present of the truth of Christ's claims, but others also present, possibly without denying the fact, did not reach the same conclusion. So after the feeding of the five thousand, the impression gained ground that "this is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world"; but when the truth behind the miracle was pointed out, the astonishment occasioned by the miracle passed away, and "from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." On the other hand, the miracles led many of the people to believe in Him and to ask, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" Others besides the disciples believed;

John iii. 2.

John xi. 45, 46.

John vi. 14.

John vi. 66.

John vii. 31.

but though Christ Himself appealed to the works He did as evidence of His Divine mission, it is doubtful if with Israel at large they had much weight. At any rate, ingenious people could easily find either flaws in the testimony or reasons for rejecting the deduction.

"Miracles"
not necessary
to support
Christianity.

Nor should it be forgotten, that the early teachers and apologists of Christianity, including the Apostle St. Paul, insisted much more strongly on the prophecies which foretold the coming of the Messiah, than on the miracles which attested His appearance. The evidential value of miracles was scarcely recognized till after Christianity had become well known in the world, and then was used more to support and bulwark the faith of those who already believed, than to convince those who rejected its teachings. This happened, not because the advocates or defenders of those teachings had any doubt in the miracles reported to have been wrought by Christ, for their faith in His power was boundless, nor because either Jew or Pagan believed miracles impossible, nor because miracles often occasioned greater difficulties than the difficulty they were intended to remove, nor yet because miracles had been used to bolster up heathen religions and mytho-

logies, but because Christianity really needed no such method of defence. It carried truth within itself. When the time came that it was thought necessary to support Christianity with stories of physical wonder, faith in Christianity was on the wane. Writing some generations later than the times they describe, by attributing to their heroes miracles or miraculous conditions, the chroniclers imply a doubt in the story they tell; and the more violent the exaggeration, the less the confidence to be placed in the truth of the story. Possibly the miracle really happened; but, real or unreal, it may be used to support other conclusions than the right one. Christ needs neither prophecy nor miracle. He stands alone, unapproachable, in the transcendent purity of His character, the sublime beauty of His teaching, the splendour of His death, the glory of His resurrection, and the continuance of His kingdom.

The appeal to "Miracles" a sign of declining faith.

We are not surprised, then, that the leaders of Israel were not won to Christ by His miracles. Nor do we wonder that they failed to see in Him the fulfilment of prophecy. The Pagan, of course, knew little, and cared less, for Jewish predictions of the Messiah; but Israel had come to give to both the promises and the events of the Old Testament

Prophecy did not appeal to Israel.

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a Messianic meaning. To the modern reader many of these interpretations seem fanciful and far-fetched, and, allowing there are some coincidences between passages in the Old Testament and circumstances in the life of Christ which cannot easily be explained away, in not a few instances the effort to trace a connexion appears to come from an after-thought, and requires no little ingenuity to explain. It has been declared by authority that the old fathers looked for more than transitory promises, and to that decision we submit, though we find no evidence in its support, and feel that the inferences advanced for it are inconclusive. But, whatever may have been the thought in the minds of the psalmists and prophets, it is certain that in the days when Christ was on earth, and perhaps for some generations earlier, many of their utterances were construed as predictions, and were made to concentrate on ideals which should create a peace the world had never known. Israel had come to look for a Messiah, an anointed priest or leader, a king reigning in the righteousness and by the power of God, who should undo the wrongs done to Israel, bring to the nation greater splendours than those of a Solomon, and set up for ever a kingdom transcending

Art. VII. of
the XXXIX. ;
but see, *e.g.*,
Burnet, Bever-
idge, or
Browne on this
Article.

and dominating all other kingdoms of earth.

Hope brightened imagination, and in the ancient writings confirmation of this doctrine was discovered abundantly and in unpromising places. Moreover, so possessed were all classes of Jewish society by the idea, that it was not more difficult for some individual to persuade himself that he was the Messiah than it was for numbers of the people to discern the proofs of his pretensions. Thus Gamaliel speaks of Theudas boasting himself to be somebody, to whom some four hundred men joined themselves, only to see him slain and themselves scattered and brought to naught. Some years later rose Judas of Galilee, "who drew away much people after him : he also perished ; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed." These may have been the only instances, and according to some scholars the former may belong to times after the Resurrection of Christ, but that the people had been disappointed in other cases seems to be implied in the question asked of Christ by some disciples of John the Baptist, "Art thou he that should come, or are we to look for another ?" Possibly the people had become dubious, not of the meaning of the prophecies, but of their fulfilment.

Desire interpreted the prophecies.

Acts v. 36, 37 ;
Cf. Josephus,
Ant. xx.

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Christ Himself
makes little
use of
prophecy.

John v. 39.
Luke iv, 17-
21.

Luke xxiv. 29.

It is natural to suppose that in some important particulars a claimant to Messiahship would appeal to the inspired writings for evidence of his claim. The more uncertain his own convictions and the more apparent the reluctance of his countrymen to follow him, the more persistent his efforts to this end. Christ, indeed, did declare that the Scriptures testified of Him, and according to St. Luke, after His resurrection, to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself; but, with one or two possible exceptions, He did not urge the application to Himself of any particular prophecy: and He may have used this line of argument because familiar and popular, without touching upon the original purpose of the prophecies. Men must see in Him for themselves the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. Later, St. Matthew will point out many coincidences; but during His ministry none seems to have been pointed out. And should it be said that others besides Philip of Bethsaida discerned in Christ Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, it should also be kept in mind that the leaders in Jerusalem who brought Jesus to death, not

Christ practically unknown in Jerusalem.

only knew nothing of the birth and bringing-up of Christ, but most of them did not know Him personally. They had heard of His teaching and miracles, but the days of His ministry in Judea were too short and His claims to Deity too stupendous for them to investigate any resemblance between Him and the Man of Sorrows depicted by Isaiah. Far different was it with the early Christians after these resemblances had been pointed out and the prophecies explained. If, in days when this had been done, many Jewish scholars refused to accept the conclusions drawn from prophecy, it may have been, not so much, as some have said, from their ignorance or obstinacy, as from the elusive and precarious nature of the evidence.

Perhaps, with such Israelites as did consider Him in the light of prediction, the fact that He came from Nazareth had no little weight in deciding against His claim to be the Messiah. The term "Nazareth," commonly taken to indicate the beautiful mountain village, overlooking the Esdraelon, now known by that name, but not certainly in existence in the time of Christ, is by some scholars supposed to designate a region rather than a place, and practically to stand for "Galilee." Thus Bethlehem in Zebulon, about

"Nazareth"
probably a
district, and
not a town.

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seven miles from the present Nazareth, is distinguished from Bethlehem-Judah by being called Bethlehem-Nazar, that is, Bethlehem of Galilee; and this Bethlehem-Nazar may have been the early home of Christ.

No one
expected
Christ to come
from
Nazareth.

Be this as it may, no one supposed that the Messiah could proceed from Galilee: as Nathanael implied in the question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" So far as we know, Nazareth was neither unpopular nor singularly wicked, and possibly the *τι αγαθον* in Nathanael's question should be *ὁ ἅγιος*—not "any good thing," but "the Holy One." Such an origin was impossible. The Messiah had never been associated with Nazareth or with Galilee. "Search and look," said the Pharisees to Nicodemus, "for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Not only was this the universal opinion, but to the cultured and educated people of Judea, Galilee had barely escaped the lot of Samaria, and, with neither history to be proud of, nor schools of learning to be compared with those of Jerusalem, had nothing to favour the idea of a reformer coming thence. In explanation of Joseph's taking the young Child and His Mother to Nazareth, St. Matthew says it was to bring about the fulfilment of a prophecy, now lost, "He shall be called a Nazarene";

John i. 46.

John vi. 52.

Matt. ii. 23.

but attention does not appear to have been directed to this fact during our Lord's ministry. Nor till years after was anything said about the journey to Bethlehem-Judah or of the Birth there, nor of the visit of the Magi and the slaughter of the Innocents,—events used by St. Matthew to show the fulfilment of prophecy in the life of Jesus. But no matter where the place of His birth, Christ was spoken of as a Galilean and a Man from Nazareth; and to most Jews nothing more was needed to disprove His claims.

Nor were His humble birth and lowly condition without objection. With no slight scorn men said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" To the well-born and highly placed leaders of Israel, it seemed utterly inappropriate, if not impossible, that the Messiah, the descendant of a line of kings, should be born of a peasant, and should be brought up amidst the surroundings of poverty. God might indeed call a ruler from the sheepfold and a prophet from among the gatherers of sycamore fruit, but that the Messiah, the Redeemer and King of Israel, should be born outside the princely families could scarcely be imagined. The position and appearance of Christ seemed to violate every condition of Messiahship. Rather than the Son of God,

His obscure origin helped to His rejection.

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Matt. xxvi. 64

He was nothing but one of the common people, a Son of man,—possibly a term of derision, never used of Him by the Evangelists, but taken up by Him as denoting His sympathy and fellowship with the lowly and fallen. No wonder the High Priest discerned blasphemy in the words of the Galilean, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” The people of His day knew nothing of the royal descent which years afterwards the genealogists laboured so diligently to show. Not even His disciples appear to have thought of Him as “David’s Son.” As to the Virgin-birth, so far as the record goes, it did not become a subject of discussion, apparently not so much as of knowledge, till many years after the Crucifixion. St. Paul gives no intimation that he knew of it, and in the first promulgation of the Gospel no use was made of it as an argument. This mystery, therefore, had nothing to do with the bringing of Christ to the Cross. Indeed, had it been brought forward at the time, and the evidence in its support been considered irrefutable, it would have saved Him, for the Rabbis had already applied the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Virgin-birth to the Messiah.

The claim of Christ to Messiahship, however, was scarcely as distinct as was His declaration of Divinity. More clearly apprehended by the Jewish leaders than by His disciples, this assumption aroused in the former indignant opposition without disturbing the faith of the latter. We shall see later how the opposition expressed itself; here, in passing, we need only observe that the incarnation of Deity involved the Virgin-birth. The fact is necessary to the theory; and Christendom has ever held the Deity of Jesus Christ to be more than theory.

His claims to Divinity repudiated.

Leaving out of consideration for the present the claim to Divinity, probably the chief objection to Jesus of Nazareth, as it was indeed the strongest so far as the Pharisees were concerned, came from the nature, perhaps in some degree from the manner, of His teaching. In an age of intense traditionalism, when the spiritual had come near being lost sight of in the literal, and scribes and lawyers were so afraid to trust their own scholarship, insight, or judgement in the interpretation of Scripture, that authority had multiplied upon authority, till the extrication of truth was next to impossible, though diligently endeavoured, Christ came, violating rabbinical rules, disregarding precedents, and, sweeping away the accretions

His teaching objectionable to the leaders of Israel.

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of sophistry and fancy, revealing the secrets of the heart and the life-springs of thought and conduct. Heedless of the doctrines and practices of the schools, He stood out as the Prophet of Common Sense. He taught that the individual soul had the right and the power of direct access to God, and needed not the interposition of priests or scholars. He reduced the office of priest and scholar, from that of mediary between the Father of all and His children, to that of helper, guide, revealer, and teacher. He taught by illustrations taken from nature and the everyday life; and His subjects concerned human sympathy, forbearance, honesty, perseverance, and purity,—subjects touching upon conduct, and not upon philosophical abstractions. In His own life He set an example of His precepts, and they who had eyes to see saw in Him a man meek and lowly in heart.

He kept Himself apart from secular movements.

Moreover, he had naught to do with sociological or political questions. His kingdom was not of this world, in any sense of the term. Indeed, it may be surmised that had He been willing to have aided or to have led Israel in rebellion against Cæsar, not only would He have found popular support both in Judea and in Galilee, but, had there appeared a chance of success, some of the very

men who accused him to Pontius Pilate of treason would have sanctioned and done their utmost to further His enterprise. Always eager for revolt, had He proclaimed the restoration of the kingdom, the people and their leaders had rallied to His standard. One of the arguments against His Messiahship was this lack of royal ambition. It had been understood that the Deliverer would be a king, and that in His reign both righteousness should prevail and the glories of Solomon's days should be restored. On the contrary, instead of the robe of a prince, Jesus of Nazareth assumed the garb of a teacher, instead of surrounding Himself with courtiers and soldiers, His companions, but twelve in number, were fishermen and toilers, men scarcely known in their own neighbourhood; rather than dwelling in a palace of cedar, oftentimes He had no place to lay His head; and one day His brow should be pressed by the circlet of thorns, rather than by the diadem of the kingdom.

Not only did He refuse to ally Himself either with the traditions and doctrines of the leaders of Israel, or with their political aspirations, but He avoided connecting Himself with any class in the community, either religious or social. Attempts have been made to

He had
nothing to do
with class
distinctions.

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show that Christ was peculiarly the friend of the labourer and artisan. He was indeed their friend, but not peculiarly so. He was quite as much the friend of the cultured and the well-to-do, though He may not have been as much their associate. The conditions of humanity to Him were as nothing in comparison with humanity itself. His was not to be the religion of a class or a caste ; but, knowing that misery and sorrow are the portion alike of rich and poor, and sin common to both, and being no respecter of persons, He prepared His Kingdom for all men, and endeavoured to unite in one brotherhood, rather than to divide into factions, all grades and ranks of society.

An Israelite,
but not a
Sectarian.

So with sectarianism in religion. He would none of it. He was neither Pharisee nor Sadducee ; no more and no less than a simple Israelite, loving and serving God devoutly, and regarding Himself as brother and neighbour to every man who needed Him. He observed the rites and ceremonies of Israel ; bade His followers listen to those who sat in Moses' seat ; kept the ancient festivals, frequented the Temple, and said nothing that could be construed as antagonistic to the teachings of the law and the prophets. But He had naught to do with divisions ; and He rebuked and

condemned leaders and teachers, sects and schools, that failed to illustrate in their conduct the principles they professed. As a result, no sect had any sympathy for Him. Either of the great Israelitish denominations could have saved Him ; but, desirous of the advantage of their school of thought rather than of the promotion of abstract justice, as He repudiated their society, so their society repudiated Him. In its process of disintegration, Israel had largely fallen into parties and sects. A man who claimed to be an Israelite and did not affiliate himself to some one of these parties or sects, though he might attract to himself the favour of a few individuals like minded as himself, had arrayed against him the force, more or less virulent, of all the sects. Christ stood aloof. To Him it mattered little what a man called himself religiously or politically or socially. These were more matters of accident than of choice. The man himself was the one important factor. Christ would make the man pure and true, a servant and a child of God, no matter what his surroundings or what his professions. The leaders of Israel, even had they taken the trouble to consider the matter, were not ready for such a Teacher. They could not have understood Him.

We do not doubt that this rejection or

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The grief and trial of the rejection.

neglect of our Blessed Lord by such leaders of the people as heard His words and beheld both His mighty deeds and the holiness of His life, added to His sorrow and suffering. At the same time it should be remembered that possibly few of the leaders in Jerusalem deliberated upon such points as have been suggested. The confusion of reports concerning the Teacher from Nazareth was great, and neither time nor opportunity was sufficient for such investigation. Prejudice outstripped judgement. Such rumours as came to the ears of those interested in this Stranger were unfavourable, and His message was so strange. Yet, as the temptation to earthly dominion had failed to provoke Him to wrong, so did the temptation to give up a mission so ungraciously heard come to naught,—and we may be sure that Satan did not neglect the opportunity of urging upon Christ the evident uselessness of His work and the worthlessness of the people whom He would save. The Lord Jesus may be misunderstood and treated with contempt, but to endure was part of His Sacrifice.

Before we consider the Passion of our Divine Redeemer as it manifested itself at

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Calvary, it is well to look somewhat into the historical evidences of that Passion, so that we may think of it, not as allegory or romance, but as real, literal, physical fact. It is matter rather of thankfulness than of regret that enquiry into this evidence has been so thorough and fearless. Christianity has everything to gain from investigation ; and everything to lose from a faith which repudiates Reason, and is afraid of the verity it professes. Even spiritual ecstasy, to be in any way helpful, must have some intelligent motive and depend upon some fact reasonably supported.

The Passion is to be regarded as actual and historical.

The books of the New Testament present the readiest and most direct testimony to the life and work of Jesus Christ ; but were these books ruled out, there would still remain to be accounted for the existence of the Church and the rise and spread of Christianity. We may take one line of external evidence. Writing about the year 117, the historian Tacitus charges the Christians with having been concerned in the conflagration of Rome in the year 64, and, scarcely knowing whether he hated the Christians more than he hated Nero, he describes the exquisite tortures the Emperor inflicted on them, who he says, "under the vulgar appellation of Christians,

Evidence outside of the New Testament.

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were already branded with deserved infamy." As the testimony of a cultured nobleman to the fact of Christianity, without the slightest interest in its welfare, doctrines, or history, the passage in the *Annales* has great weight, even should the details of the persecution have come to Tacitus by hearsay, and, owing to his contempt of Nero, have been exaggerated by him. Tacitus would not have spoken of a religion which he was not satisfied existed at the time of which he wrote. For the information of his readers he acquainted himself with its beginnings.

Tacit. Annal.
xv. 44 ;
Gibbon's
Translation :
see his Remarks on this
passage in his
Sixteenth
Chapter.

"They derived," he says, "their name and origin from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, had suffered death, by the sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate. For a while this dire superstition was checked ; but it again burst forth, and not only spread itself over Judea, the first seat of this mischievous sect, but was even introduced into Rome, the common asylum which receives and protects whatever is impure, whatever is atrocious. The confessions of those who were seized, discovered a great multitude of their accomplices, and they were all convicted, not so much for the crime of setting fire to the city, as for their hatred of human kind. They died in torments, and their torments were em-

bittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses; others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs; others again, smeared over with combustible materials, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of the night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the melancholy spectacle, which was accompanied with a horse race, and honoured with the presence of the Emperor, who mingled with the populace in the dress and attitude of a charioteer. The guilt of the Christians deserved, indeed, the most exemplary punishment, but the public abhorrence was changed into commiseration, from the opinion that those unhappy wretches were sacrificed, not so much to the public welfare, as to the cruelty of a jealous tyrant."

A little earlier than the time that Tacitus wrote this narrative, in the years 103 and 104, under the Emperor Trajan, Pliny the Younger was the imperial legate in the province of Bithynia. Deeply attached to the religion of his fathers, he was grieved to find the Christians in Bithynia so numerous that the temples of the gods were almost deserted, the sacred rites were falling into disuse, and the trade in animals for sacrifice was on the point of disappearing. He knew nothing about these

Pliny's *Ep. ad Traj.* xcvi., xcvi.: see Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity*, ii. 148, 330; also Bigg's *Origins of Christianity*, 88-98.

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people, except that they caused trouble and interfered with business. So he set to mending matters by putting some of them to death, and then securing the Emperor's sanction for his act. Later he thought it necessary to enquire into the charges brought against this new religion. To his surprise he discovered that the Christians were not guilty of immorality, and did not, as some said, kill and eat little children. He examined witnesses, who on the promulgation of his edict against certain classes of societies had given up Christianity, and therefore would be likely to tell the worst they knew of the people they had forsaken. But their testimony only added to his perplexity.

"They maintained," Pliny writes, "that the sum of their fault or error was this, that it was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and sing by turns a hymn to Christ as God; and to bind themselves with an oath, not for any wickedness, but not to commit theft or robbery or adultery, not to break their word, not to deny a deposit when claimed. After this their custom was to depart, and meet together again for the purpose of taking food, but common and innocent food (not human flesh), and even this they had ceased to do after the promul-

gation of my edict, in which according to your instructions I had forbidden clubs."

These authorities sufficiently prove, not only the existence of Christianity, but also that, in the first decade of the second century, a Roman historian knew that Christianity had its origin in Jesus Christ, who had suffered death in Judea under Pontius Pilate; and a Roman governor had ascertained that early in the morning Christian people met for worship and sang hymns antiphonally to Christ as God, and afterwards gathered at another service, where they ate together, most likely in the Holy Eucharist. It is not improbable that the rumour that the Christians ate flesh at their services, arose from expressions used by them concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. These men knew nothing of the writings which later were gathered into the Canon of the New Testament. They had no sympathy whatever for the new religion, and in mentioning it had no intention of supporting its claims or furthering its progress.

Value of these testimonies.

To establish a religion so definitely and so generally as Christianity was established takes time. The conditions which Pliny found in Bithynia were not brought about in a day, or without an adequate cause. Moreover, it

The evidence implies that Christianity had been at work for years.

had originated in a province far away from Bithynia, and a foreign cult, especially one antagonistic to all other cults, could not spread and make firm itself at once. It appears on secular and pagan testimony as well known both at Rome and in Bithynia. Nor does a religion come into being of itself. It springs out of the teaching of some individual or the presentation of some principle, sufficiently important sooner or later to attract attention and to win adherents. Had we no other evidence than that of Tacitus and Pliny, we should know that the Founder of Christianity was Jesus Christ, put to death in Judea, and worshipped as God by the multitudes who believed in Him.

The begin-
nings of
Christian
testimony.

We may be sure that if these Roman noblemen knew this much of Christianity, the people who had adopted it knew much more. Their teachers had ascertained the facts about this Jesus Christ, what He had done, and why He was given Divine honours and men were ready to die for Him. Indeed, it was upon these facts, which they made known everywhere, they based their doctrine. And it is not unreasonable to suppose, that very early the occasion and need would arise for some things to be written about Him. The leaders and instructors of a Society which had

spread itself over the Empire, and maintained a strong and close organisation, would come to use the pen as well as the voice. And though much that was written has perished, and its worth therefore cannot be ascertained, yet that which remains is, to say the least, as deserving of respectful consideration as anything written by contemporary Pagan authors.

Among the fragments which have come down to us is the Epistle of Barnabas, supposed to have been written by a Jewish convert at Alexandria sometime between A.D. 70 and 79, a very few years after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is next to certain that the writer had seen the Gospel according to St. Matthew. He refers to the sufferings of Christ, and seeks to discover in them the fulfilment of prophecy. In maintaining the Deity of the Lord Jesus, he ventures to deny that David called Christ his Son: "fearing and understanding the error of the wicked," David expressly called Him his Lord and the Son of God. "Jesus who was manifest, both by type and in the flesh, is not the Son of man, but the Son of God." It was necessary that Christ should come in the flesh, else He could not have overcome death, or healed us by His wounds, or sanctified us in the blood of His

The Epistle of Barnabas: See on these early Christian writers summaries in Dict. of Christian Biography, and especially in Bigg, *ut supra*.

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sprinkling; nor could man have been saved by beholding Him,—for our eyes are not able so much as to bear the rays of the sun, which is the work of His hands, and which shall some day be put out.

St. Clement,
Bishop of
Rome.

Some twenty years later, about the year 97, Clement of Rome wrote a letter on behalf of the Church in that city to the Church at Corinth, which then happened to be greatly disturbed by internal dissensions. Among the arguments to peace advanced in this epistle is one drawn from the humility of Christ. He did not come to earth in pomp and arrogance, but lowly, as a child, without form or comeliness, deficient in comparison with the ordinary form of men, and to be exposed to labour, stripes, and affliction. Yet in His resurrection and coming again there is life for all. "By Him we look up to the heights of heaven. By Him we behold, as in a glass, His immaculate and most excellent visage. By Him are the eyes of our hearts opened. By Him our foolish and darkened understanding blossoms up anew towards His marvellous light. By Him the Lord has willed that we should taste of the knowledge of immortality." It is certain that Clement had read several of the books of the New Testament. He grasped firmly the essential truths of Christianity, especially that

which more nearly concerns our subject: our justification is by faith in Christ, and our ransom is the blood of Christ that was given for us.

Other writers there are, such as St. Ignatius and Hermas; but for the purpose of showing testimony outside of the New Testament to the fact and doctrines of Christianity, within the first century of its existence, these will suffice.

Authorities differ as to the date and authorship of the Epistle of St. James. If it were written by James the son of Zebedee, it must have been before the year 44, for in that year this James was put to death by Herod. That date would make it the earliest book of the New Testament. Tradition, however, more generally ascribes the Epistle to James, the son of Alphæus or Clopas, known as James the Less, and called the brother of the Lord, being His first cousin. This would make it possible for the date to be brought down. But had it been the work of either of these men, it is inconceivable that so little mention should be made in it of Him with whom they were so intimately associated. This has led some scholars to suppose an unknown James, and to bring the date into the second century.

The Epistle
of St. James.

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For our purpose, though we know no good reason why the date should be made so late, the date is of little moment. The writer gives no particulars of the life and character of Christ beyond speaking of "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory," thereby implying that the religion or faith of Christ had assumed definite form, and making two references to "the coming of the Lord," which, he says, "draweth nigh," and another to "the elders of the Church." It has been suggested that the expression "the Lord of glory" involves the belief in the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ, and even in His Divinity; and that is possible.

The oldest
Christian
writing in
existence.

More certainly may the First Epistle to the Thessalonians be regarded as the oldest Christian writing in existence. There is no difficulty in fixing the date of this Epistle sometime between the years 49 and 53, the exact year depending upon the system of chronology adopted. St. Paul had visited Thessalonica and planted the Church there. About twenty years had passed since the Crucifixion of Christ, and the details of that event were still fresh in men's minds. Already there may have been put together some fragments of the sayings and some reports of the deeds of our Lord, but the Gospels as we have

them had not been written, and, so far as we know, the information given concerning Christ had been by word of mouth. Yet the Thessalonians must have been familiar enough with the outlines of His life as to understand the allusions made by the Apostle in this Epistle. Here, however, within this Epistle, before any other line of the New Testament was written, are to be found particulars of first historical importance, given, too, rather by way of illustration and incidentally than for information.

St. Paul speaks of "our Lord Jesus Christ" as having been "killed" by the Jews, raised by God from the dead, and coming again. Jesus, he says, delivers us from the wrath to come. He declares that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The "day of the Lord," which "so cometh as a thief in the night," St. Paul describes in magnificent form:—"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

References in
1 Thess. to
facts in
Christ's life,
etc.

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St. Paul
recognizes
the Divinity
of Christ.

With the utmost reverence, uniting His Name with that of God the Father, the Apostle speaks of the "Lord Jesus Christ" and the "Lord Jesus" as the Son of God, one with the Father in giving life and grace and in receiving prayer, and declares that God has appointed us "unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." The Glad Tidings are both of God and of Christ. And thus, even in Europe, at this early date, not only were Christian people gathered within a Society, but there was written testimony to the Sufferings and Death of Christ, and to His Resurrection and Second Advent.

The evidence
of the other
Pauline
Epistles.

Within the next twelve or thirteen years were written the other Epistles of St. Paul, and should the dates of all the other books in the New Testament be set after the martyrdom of the Apostle, which tradition says was in the year 67, these Epistles sufficiently show that the principal events in the life of Christ were well known. Their testimony to that life is the more noteworthy because it is incidental and not designed to be complete. In all likelihood, St. Paul never saw one of the Gospels, and knew nothing of the parables and miracles, and of many minor incidents

in the Divine life, recorded therein. These were not necessary for his mission. With sure judgement he discerned that Christ Jesus was the Redeemer of men, and that His redemption had its power in the Death, and its proof and glory in the Resurrection. His belief in the Messiahship of Jesus rested upon the fact that Jesus suffered, as the prophets had foretold He should, but the necessity of which the people questioned. He gloried in the Cross, on which the Saviour had died and by which God and men were reconciled. He describes the institution of the Holy Communion ; and declares that as Christ died for our sins, so was He buried, and so He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

Written evidence of these facts, then, was in existence and was scattered abroad between the years 53 and 67. Much earlier still, the conversion of St. Paul witnessed to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. There may have been other documents, too, by which the life of our Blessed Lord was made known to the world. It is not to be supposed that having adopted the religion of Christ, and realizing that that religion rests so entirely on a Person, and not on a philosophy or an institution, people would not have sought to find out all

Information concerning the Life of Christ demanded.

that could be discovered of Him. Information concerning Him for whom they had ventured their lives would be eagerly enquired for; and, knowing their devotion to their Lord and their enthusiasm in His service, we may be sure that by those who had it the information was as eagerly given. In Christianity everything turns on this personal relation to and knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Doctrines concerning Him are of minor importance compared with Christ Himself. The most urgent of all questions then was, and still is: What did *He* say or do? At first the stories of the Wonderful Life were passed on from one to another, perhaps with some confusion and contradiction, and yet in such a way, that not only in Judea and in Galilee, but throughout the world wherever the Sacred Name was spoken, believers had a fair conception of their Beloved Redeemer.

Belief and
enquiry could
work together.

It does not follow that the mere existence of these writings proves that the events they relate happened, though probability and common sense are in their favour; but they show that within a few years of the time assigned to those events, they were believed to have happened, and that on that belief men were shaping their conduct and building their hopes. They also testify that the years

had not been so many as to afford opportunity for invention or exaggeration. There were witnesses still living, and they who heard them could judge of the veracity and trustworthiness of such witnesses, and investigate for themselves the facts of which they spoke. St. Paul, for instance, records the appearance of Christ after the Resurrection to above five hundred brethren at once: "of whom," he says, writing to the Corinthians about the year 59, "the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."

As time went on, probably before the Epistle to the Thessalonians was written, some disciples would endeavour to put in more permanent form an account of those events and doctrines which were of greatest importance. This may have been done to furnish teachers and evangelists with particulars for their work, or to preserve memoranda for future reference, or to disseminate knowledge generally. None of these primitive efforts has survived; nor till near the time of St. Paul's martyrdom, perhaps not till later, does there appear to have been any serious attempt to gather together, examine, and set in definite and final form, the traditions, written or unwritten, which had been scattered abroad concerning the life of Jesus Christ.

Early narratives of the Life of Christ.

Traditions are apt to multiply, and in their variation and colouring to endanger the truth which they are supposed to hand on; and though we may reasonably imagine that the reverence which the first believers in Christ had of Him, and of all that belonged to Him, somewhat stayed the growth, yet even they were not wholly freed from the tendency which besets the human mind when possessed of intense affection and unquestioning faith.

The Bible is apt to be regarded as more trustworthy when recognition is made of the unequal value of its parts.

In saying this, and admitting that the same principle applies to the books of the Old Testament as well as to those of the New, we do not desire to cast doubt on the authority and genuineness of the Sacred Scriptures, except so far as such doubt may help to increase confidence in such authority and genuineness. The adherents of mechanical inspiration and unquestionable supremacy have no little difficulty in these days of serious and severe criticism in defending their position; and in making the whole depend upon the verity of every particular, as the particulars are disputed, and sometimes disproved, they run the risk of losing faith in the whole. There is little doubt that this extreme position, adopted by some of the reforming sects of the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries, and even now not wholly discarded, has been productive of much irreverence and unbelief. If in all its parts the Bible can be literally interpreted and is of final and infallible authority, so that against it can be set neither reason nor fact, there is nothing more to be said than this: multitudes of readers have to reject it, and in rejecting it are left without the most trustworthy witness to truth. On the other hand, if it be admitted that there are elements which may be questioned and set aside without danger to the Book as a whole, there is good hope that the authority of all that is true and helpful will be advanced. There is no reason in throwing away the gold because it is mingled with dross. Dean Milman called this "*the great religious problem—the discovery, if possible, of a test by which we may discern what are the eternal and irrevocable truths of the Bible, what the imaginative vesture, the framework, in which those truths are set forth in the Hebrew and even in the Christian Scriptures.*" The first to start this enquiry, as Dean Stanley long since reminded us, was Aristobulus, chief of the Jewish community in Alexandria, in the second century before Christ. He maintained that the spirit and not the letter is the essence of every

Annals of St. Paul's, p. 467.

History of the Jewish Church: iii. 248.

great and good utterance; and, though an allegorist, and thereby possibly responsible for some of the extravagances of Philo and of Origen, he led the way for that company of scholars which numbers in its ranks men such as Maimonides, Richard Hooker, Cudworth, Schleiermacher, and Hegel. "It must be borne in mind that the first origin of the allegorical interpretation lay in the sincere and laudable effort to extract from the coarse materials of primitive imagery the more elevated truths which often lay wrapt up in them, to draw out the ethical and the spiritual elements of the Bible, and to discard those which were temporary and accidental." The same necessity of investigation affects the history contained in the Bible, as well as the philosophy or poetry. In that history there are permanent elements, true in themselves, and necessary to the purpose or scheme of the sacred writings; but it would be strange if there were not also elements which, whether true or not, are of less consequence, and which may be set aside or regarded indifferently.

St. Mark's
Gospel.

The first effort towards a narrative of the life of Christ, authoritative and trustworthy, of which we know anything, appears in the Gospel called "according to St. Mark," written

about A.D. 70. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, writing about the year 130, and quoted by Eusebius some two hundred years later, states on older authority that Mark, having become the interpreter of St. Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered that was either said or done by Christ. He himself did not either hear the Lord or follow Him ; but listening to St. Peter, who adapted his instructions to the needs of his hearers, he made it his care not to omit anything that he heard, or to set down any false statement therein. This tradition makes St. Peter the source of information ; and, indeed, Tertullian, following the opinion reiterated by Irenæus and Clement of Alexandria, declares that the Gospel published by Mark may be called Peter's. Papias's testimony has never been contradicted, though only hearsay, and open to the suspicion that he was seeking to enhance the value of the writing of a comparatively unknown man, by ascribing the substance of it to an Apostle. The probability is that the origin of the Gospel was as obscure then as it is now, interest in it not having arisen till long after it had been in circulation.

The tradition, however, if accepted, does not imply that the writer of this Gospel did

For earlier dates of the Gospels, see Harnack's *Date of the Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*. He holds that St. Mark and St. Luke were written before A.D. 60, and the Acts by A.D. 64.

St. Mark did not depend entirely, if at all, upon St. Peter.

not incorporate into his work information from other sources. Acting rather as editor than as author, he endeavoured to collect all the material that in his judgement could be depended upon and was adaptable to his purpose. That purpose may have been only to present the facts about our Lord as they were commonly accepted by the Christian community, and not to set forth and support any given doctrine or opinion concerning Him. Efforts have been made to trace the sources of the writer's information ; but without success.

Were the Gospels coloured by the ideals entertained of Christ?

Some scholars have supposed that this presentation of facts would be coloured by the Church's belief in Christ ; that is to say, as the Church realized more the beauty and power of His character, the meaning of His words, and the purpose of His mission, and thereby exalted Him above the estimate formed of Him by the first disciples, so the facts would be selected and set forth to accord with that realization. This is natural enough. One's ideal of a man necessarily leads one in writing his life to take such events and sayings, to shape and develop them, and to use them, so as to illustrate and prove that ideal. But there is no evidence that the ideal of Christ entertained by the disciples at the time of the

descent of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost was ever changed, though as a matter of course it must have been developed. The tendency to make less of the human nature in Christ and to exaggerate the Divine, to forget Jesus of Nazareth in the Son of God, may have had force in later times, but the early evangelists appear to have had no difficulty in apprehending and setting forth in due proportions the facts concerning the two natures. Christ to them, indeed, was the Elder Brother; He was also God out of God. The Second Adam was the Lord from heaven. Undoubtedly in them, as in most Christian people now, as time went on, the ideal deepened and broadened in intensity and appreciation. But it is difficult to conceive any ideal higher than that presented by St. Paul, earlier than the writing of this Gospel. From the day that the disciples knew their Lord was risen from the dead, there was little room left for them to doubt His grace and power.

Even should the Church's ideal of her Lord have advanced or changed, as some think, it is not to be supposed that the writers of the Gospel exaggerated or suppressed facts to suit their theory. Nor can it be admitted that because of their concep-

The Evangelists sought to discover and tell the truth.

tion of prophecy, they resorted to invention and forgery to supply coincidences. Had they done so, they would have fitted the alleged facts more closely to the predictions, whereas oftentimes the correspondence appears strained and incomplete. At the time of the composition of this Gospel there were people still living conversant enough with those facts to prevent any misuse of them. Others besides the writer knew the things whereof he wrote; and others, too, besides those who gave the traditions from which he made his compilation. Curiously enough, fault was early found with St. Mark's narrative because of its brevity, and for five hundred years its authority compared with that of the other Gospels was variously estimated, generally to its disadvantage. To-day it is regarded as the foremost of the Gospels, both because of its nearness to the times of which it treats, and because of its outspoken style and evident adherence to its authorities. Without being complete or strictly chronological, though probably more so than any of the other Gospels, this Gospel is noticeable for its vivid realism, richness of detail, attention to the deeds of our Lord, and especially to the miracles, rather than to His discourses, and history of the development of

the disciple-life. It deals chiefly with the ministry of Christ in Galilee. Little can be deduced from its silence on incidents recorded in other accounts. Probably the editor did not know of them, or thought them unnecessary for his purpose.

By the year 70, then, as most authorities agree, and possibly earlier, there was in circulation a Life of our Blessed Lord, though it may not have been in its present form, and it may have been some years before that circulation extended over the whole Church. Tradition says that it was written at Rome and for Roman Christians; and for a long time its use may have been local. When it became better known, probably all traces of its origin were lost. It will be observed that the writer makes no mention of Christ's birth or childhood, and, with but one exception, quotes no prophecy.

Date of the Gospel according to St. Mark.

From amid the conflict of opinion it is interesting to hear the conclusions of a scholar such as Ernest Rénan on this Gospel. Much has been written on the subject since his day, but little has been made clearer. He disbelieves in the miraculous and the supernatural, but comparing St. Mark's narrative with the others, in the Introduction to his Life of Jesus, he says:—

Rénan upon St. Mark.

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"The Gospel of Mark is much firmer, more precise, containing fewer subsequent additions. He is the one of the three synoptics who has remained the most primitive, the most original, the one to whom the fewest after-elements have been added. In Mark the facts are related with a clearness for which we seek in vain amongst the other Evangelists. He likes to report certain words of Jesus in Syro-Chaldean. He is full of minute observations, coming doubtless from an eye-witness. There is nothing to prevent our agreeing with Papias in regarding this eye-witness, who evidently had followed Jesus, who had loved Him and observed Him very closely, and who had preserved a lively image of Him, as the Apostle Peter himself."

St. Matthew's
Gospel.

The writer of the Gospel according to St. Matthew seems to have had before him either the Gospel according to St. Mark, or some document or group of traditions from which much of the material in the later Gospel was taken, and also sources of information not at the disposal of his predecessor. He adds much to the story, and sometimes modifies St. Mark's account, more by way of literary finish than from superior knowledge. "In all cases where matter is common to both Gospels, St. Mark must be regarded as not

*Contentio
Veritatis*, p.
214.

only earlier in point of time, but also as more accurate in point of detail, and St. Matthew not only secondary in respect of dependence, but also as inferior in respect of the faithful transmission of historical fact." The date is uncertain. Though not before the Fall of Jerusalem, it was probably not long after: about the year 74. By the stress the writer lays, for instance, on prophecy, the genealogy of Christ back to Abraham, the Sermon on the Mount corresponding to the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, and the fulfilment of the Law, it may be gathered that he wrote for Jewish readers, and was himself a Jew. It may be that the author or editor of this Gospel was related to the Apostle Matthew, as St. Mark is said to have been related to St. Peter, which is not to be taken as meaning that St. Matthew wrote the book, but that it contains the story much as it was told by him, or that it is sheltered under his name.

Some years after these two Gospels had been published, perhaps about A.D. 80, a physician, and a Gentile friend of St. Paul, Luke by name, undertakes to set in order a narrative of those things which, he says, are most surely believed among us. He writes primarily, if not entirely, for the instruction of an eminent

St. Luke's
Gospel.

convert, probably a Greek ; and to the care and benevolence of this "most excellent Theophilus" is the Church indebted for the most beautiful and most finished story of her Lord's life. This writer claims to have had "perfect understanding of all things from the very first," meaning thereby that he had accurately traced out those traditions which had been delivered to him, and to others, by those who were eye-witnesses, and who became ministers of the word. He thus indicates that his part has been simply that of a gleaner and sifter of material, and that all he says is at second-hand. Indeed, he aims to report that which passes among those who have knowledge of the facts as the true story of the Sacred Life. There is little doubt that among other documents he used St. Mark's Gospel, as the writer of St. Matthew had done, taking from it some material which his immediate predecessor had passed by ; so that St. Mark is almost absorbed in St. Matthew and St. Luke. It is of course possible, as in the case of St. Matthew, that St. Luke drew from the sources St. Mark had drawn from, and therefore may not have seen the actual St. Mark. There is no suggestion that St. Luke borrowed anything from St. Matthew ; indeed, it is doubtful if he knew of the existence of that Gospel, though he must

have had, if not the same, a similar collection of the Sayings of Christ that St. Matthew had. Some information he had outside of any that the former Evangelists possessed. It has been shown that of the thirty-four miracles recorded in the three Gospels, six are peculiar to St. Luke, three to St. Matthew, and two to St. Mark; and of the thirty-one parables, eighteen are peculiar to St. Luke, ten to St. Matthew, and one to St. Mark. The matter peculiar to St. Luke is rather more than half of the whole Gospel.

The authorship of the Fourth Gospel is still a matter of dispute, with a growing tendency towards ascribing it, according to ancient tradition, and rightly we believe, to St. John the Apostle. He had personal knowledge of the incidents he recorded, to say nothing of a clearer insight into the nature of Christ. Writing many years later than the other Evangelists, he had the chance of reading their Gospels, and his Gospel has been looked upon as supplementing theirs. But it is possible that instead of intending this, he purposed to bring out more clearly and emphatically the fact of the Word made flesh, the Incarnation and Deity of Christ, and to illustrate that fact from his own recollections.

St. John's
Gospel.

Each of the narratives commonly called the

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The Synoptic Gospels, if revised, were not compared together for revision.

Synoptic may have been revised and expanded before assuming its present form. No comparison seems to have been made or design of agreement entertained, else there had been some attempt evident to remove the contradictions which exist. Possibly, having been set forth independently of each other, when comparison could have been made reconciliation was out of the question. They were written far away from Palestine, most likely for some local or immediate use, and without any thought that they would obtain wide circulation and receive the approval of the Church. Their writers neither claimed for themselves inspiration nor declared their work infallible. Nowhere do they so much as imply that they either had supernatural gifts, or were dependent other than upon their judgement, their memory, and the material which they had collected. And yet, in the preservation of these fugitive pieces of biography, so remarkable under the circumstances, not singularly but universally, there has been a recognition of Divine providence. The Church has not been able to think that in the writing and the transmission of these documents there was nothing more than chance or accident.

But even when the Gospels became generally

known, they were not for some generations regarded as equal in dignity and authority with the books of the Old Testament. They were simply popular sketches of the life of One who by these writers, and by those for whom they wrote, was believed in and beloved, even to readiness to lay down all they had for His sake. It was not until these books had stood the test of time and examination, that the Church recognized them as of final authority, and gave them a place of high dignity in Divine service.

Gospels regarded at first as inferior to the Old Testament Scriptures.

Nor, in the criticism to which these oldest records of the words and deeds of our Blessed Lord was subject, need we doubt that the investigation was as fearless and as exacting as any which can be made to-day. The moment that Christianity entered the Greek world, and won to itself the Greek mind, it received an intellectual power at least equal to any the nations have known since. Perhaps we may dare to say that criticism then was more a matter of life and death than criticism is apt to be in these days. The men who sifted the evidence in favour of the Gospels, in the second and third centuries, did so not from mere scholastic curiosity, but out of a deep conviction that these Gospels concerned Him for whom they had risked so much, and

Criticism of the Gospels was from the first thorough.

H

were ready to sacrifice everything. Did they tell the truth about Him? To them the answer was of momentous consequence,—quite as much as it is to the critics of to-day, if not more so. Their conclusions are at any rate worthy of respect.

The attack of Celsus on Christianity. See Origen's *Eight Books against Celsus* (especially the Fourth and Fifth); also T. R. Glover's *Conflict of Religions in the Roman Empire*, chap. viii.; and Bigg, *ut supra*, chap. xix.

No criticism of Christianity was more thorough and severe than that of the cultured, candid, and scholarly Celsus, in the closing years of the reign of Marcus Aurelius, about the year 178. He had a gift of criticism and sarcasm not less keen and virulent than that of Voltaire, and a vision quite as narrow, but with more learning and a stronger desire for justice. Origen makes light of "the supposed great learning of Celsus," which, he tells us, "is composed rather of curious trifles and silly talk than anything else"; but Origen, though in learning superior, did not strengthen his defence by disparaging the skill and knowledge of his rival. Celsus had read in philosophy extensively; he had travelled far, and conversed with men of many schools of thought; and he had made himself familiar, not only with some of the books of the Old Testament, but also with the Four Gospels and the Pauline Epistles. A strong conservatism, combined with a still stronger dislike of an individualism that tended to disturb the general tranquillity,

set him in antagonism to the whole system of Christianity. He had no sympathy for men who walled themselves off and isolated themselves from mankind, and who could not hold their own myths and illusions without condemning those of other people. For truth itself, apart from its unifying influence, he had little care. Anything that divided, no matter how true it was in itself, was mischievous and should be avoided. The Gospels ran counter to all that Celsus held and taught ; and upon them his vitriolic soul poured out itself in sneer and invective. Notwithstanding the spread of Christianity, he declared that Christ had utterly failed ; though he does not explain why he thought it necessary to write a book condemning Him. He railed against the facts and doctrines, the teachers and the disciples, of this irrational and unwelcome religion, using language in doing so unequalled for coarseness and vituperation. His anger at the story of the Passion of Christ is vehement : Jesus was "unhelped by the Father, and unable to help himself" ; he sought to escape death ; he was incapable of enduring the thirst upon the Cross,—“which many a common man will endure.” As to the Incarnation and the Resurrection, Celsus regarded them as outside of all possible belief.

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And yet
Christianity
held its own.

Celsus was answered by Origen; but the most decisive reply was made by the world itself. The philosopher supposed that he had dealt a death-blow to a religion which he held inimical to the welfare of humanity. When he had spoken, he felt there was no more to be said. But the world did not listen. His book, "The True Word," has perished; and only fragments remain, preserved in the pages of his Christian opponent. Between the Cæsar whom Celsus loved and the Christ whom he hated, the ages made their choice.

Celsus and
others really
helped the
religion they
condemned.

But this thing Celsus did for Christianity, as has been pointed out many times: with the single exception of the article on the Holy Ghost, the whole Christian creed could be reconstructed from his book. He differs from almost every principle thereof; but his statements are as a rule exact, and his knowledge was extensive. He seems to be entirely unaware of any growth or development of doctrine in the Christian Church. That Christ is God; that He is "the slave of pity for those who mourn"; that He received the sinful and the ignorant; that He wrought miracles;—all this, and much more, Celsus testifies is believed of Him. The facts of His life as given in the Gospels are indeed regarded as inventions, and the deductions

drawn from them are denied ; but no matter what their source or the use made of them, Celsus is a witness that they were recorded and believed. In his endeavour to show the superiority of the Pagan mysteries, which were only for the pure and cultured, Celsus brings forward to the disparagement of Christianity that it seeks the salvation of the wicked and the enlightenment of the untaught. He himself says, that not only did Jesus gather around Him ten or eleven persons of notorious character, the very wickedest of tax-gatherers and sailors, but that the teachers of the Gospel sought their converts among foolish and low individuals, and persons devoid of perception, and slaves, and women, and children. He did not realize that the very purpose of Christianity was to lift up the fallen and bring the lost and forsaken back to God.

In all this appears the evidence that the Gospels were subjected to an investigation as searching and as prejudiced as any that it is possible to place them under to-day. Vitality and verity do not always go together, but the fact that the Gospels survived such criticism need not be ascribed more to Divine interposition than to human judgement. Men thought out the problems, discussed the arguments, reasoned over the objections, and

Criticism had
to be expected.

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decided for the Gospels. Nor was Celsus the only Pagan philosopher who examined into their teaching. Galen the physician and Lucian the essayist were among those who had something to say concerning the habits and doctrines of Christian people from a point of view close beside that of Celsus. Christianity, and with it not only its adherents, but also its books, had to stand the test of both political persecution and philosophical antagonism.

The Evangelists, like other historians, not infallible or unprejudiced, but careful.

The Evangelists, however, do not seem to have given a thought to the criticism which sooner or later would assail their work. They wrote with a childlike consciousness of truth, so satisfied that they were telling the truth, that they make no attempt to defend their statements. They simply set forth what they believe to be facts, as they were given to them, regardless of consequences. They made no pretensions to more than honesty and diligence; and, unless prejudice rule them out of consideration without enquiry, it may fairly be supposed that, with all the grace and wisdom they possessed, they intended and endeavoured to ascertain and to record the truth. Their purpose was sincerely and truly to set forth the life and doctrine of their Lord. In the carrying out of that purpose

it is possible that they made mistakes—indeed, it would have been suspicious had they not; but there is no reason to question their industry and carefulness. They did the best they could with the evidence before them; and if in any particular the evidence failed to agree, so as to leave the fact uncertain, the fault lay not so much in the evidence, which may have been as clear and straightforward as honesty could make it, but in the imperfection of human nature, which, on the one hand, may have misled the most careful observer, and, on the other, may have hindered the most judicious from detecting the error. Misapprehension of the evidence is not to be confused with wilful perversion of the truth.

Allowing this much, however, and admitting that the design of the writers of the Gospels was not so much exactness of detail, as the distinct outline of the Life, its spirit rather than its accidents, no one can question that they did present to the world for all time, and with astonishing unanimity, a delineation of Christ of rarest loveliness and of satisfying power. The Figure drawn by them is the same in all the sketches. Amid the scenes which sometimes differ in particulars, uttering words and doing deeds, which again are in

The general impression created by the Gospels.

some points diversely reported, He stands out the one Divine Man, in the same majesty, sweetness, wisdom, and love. In spite of variations in colouring and wording, from these writers we know Jesus of Nazareth clearly and distinctly; and to the accuracy of the knowledge the critics bear witness, in that they spend their efforts discovering or reconciling possible differences in the story and surroundings of the Life, and leave the Life itself alone in its flawless and unique truth and beauty.

Ideals of
Christ may
not be
substituted
for the Christ
of history.

The attempt to create an ideal Christ, partly out of the Gospels, and partly out of the individual fancy, is as rife to-day as it has ever been, perhaps more so. Some one characteristic is singled out from all other characteristics, and by exaggeration and colouring is made to illustrate a conception founded, not on what Christ was or is, but on what it is supposed He should be. Thus He is represented as the ideal and perfect man, but the standard of idealism and perfection varies according to the imagination of the individual. It is possible that a beautiful and helpful creation is thus set forth, but if it merely reflects the inventor's mind, it may be far from the Christ of history. They who indulge in

this process of making a Christ to suit their way of thinking, do so either from a feeling of discontent with the doctrines concerning the Christ given in the New Testament, and therefore held by the Church, or from the opinion that every age must have its own measure and delineation of the perfect man,—a man who shall correspond to its sense of virtue and grace. But this figment of fancy is not the Christ who suffered for the sins of men, and to whom apostles and evangelists looked for the salvation of the world. It sets aside fact and history, and destroys faith in Him who remains through all time ever the same.

Thus it is that the Sacred Scriptures not only contain all things necessary to salvation, but they also present the only trustworthy picture of Christ. That which is not told therein concerning Him is uncertain; and yet it may be questioned, if additions to the story are as misleading as are omissions and reductions. To dwell upon the graceful character and pure life of Christ, and exclude all reference to His sufferings, thinking only of the charms of Nazareth and nothing of the sorrows of Calvary, is to detract from His glory, to misrepresent Him and the purpose for which He came into the world, and to do

The description and doctrine of Christ to be taken as a whole, and no part suppressed.

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more damage to the souls of men than was done by the inventions devised to make more impressive His words and works. The most dangerous of all errors lies in suppressing part of the truth. To ignore the fact that our Divine Redeemer was both a Sacrifice and an Offerer of Sacrifice is to change the very nature of Christianity, and to give to Him a character far from that which belonged to Him. It is to leave His whole life unexplained and without motive. To take the Cross out of the religion of Jesus Christ is to destroy the essence of that religion, and to make a religion that the early Christians knew nothing of.

Misinterpretation sometimes leads to clearer understanding.

It is not to be denied that, in the ages which have passed since the Gospel was first preached, there have been many misinterpretations and corruptions of that Gospel. Some perversions have become popular, and not a few have wrought much ill. On the other hand, and in some measure because of those very departures from the primitive faith, there have been expositions and explanations which have enabled the Church in later times to understand the truth more clearly than the Church did in the first ages. The fuller understanding may not always have led to greater faith or to more unselfish devotion; but that

was not necessarily the fault of advanced knowledge. It has helped to correct mistaken conclusions. It has made errors serve as stepping-stones to truth. No research, even when undertaken antagonistically, is to be deprecated. Not one age has been useless. The thought of each has contributed towards the unfolding of the Divine mind. Not only have the poets expressed the soul of Christianity, and the theologians set forth its nature and application, but they have done equally good service, who, in investigating nature, have shown where Christian people have misunderstood their religion, and brought it into conflict with truths and facts which may not be doubted. There can be no contradiction between nature and Christianity. If men have supposed such, it is certain that they have failed to grasp the truth in one or the other. And no fact in Nature is clearer than that triumph and success come only out of struggling and suffering, and life out of agony and death.

The foregoing considerations may not be as conclusive as some would have them. If we have conceded much to modern thought that formerly was accepted without serious dispute, it is because we are convinced that the

After all that modern criticism has done, the foundations remain untouched.

truth of Christ can stand without such. For all practical purposes enough remains to assure us that the fact and history of our Blessed Lord rest upon a safe foundation.

The Sacrifice
of Christ still
all-important.

We cannot, it is true, think of the Passion of our Divine Redeemer as some have thought of it, and possibly still think; but it is to us none the less real and efficacious. Never may we allow ourselves to forget that our Lord was subject to all the temptations common to humanity. The death unto sin involved severe trial. Either by the Tempter, or by the conditions of His human nature and of the duty which lay before Him, He was ever being urged, pressed, enticed, to give up. The physical and mental pains which He endured were so many constraining influences to this end. The arrest, the trial, and the crucifixion have their significance in that they were calculated to reduce Him to the lowest possible point of resistance. If He could die unto them, and therefore unto the sin which they would have perpetuated had they prevailed against Him, the Sacrifice would be accomplished, and the redemption and salvation of His brethren secured.

By the Passion of our Divine Redeemer is

meant His Agony in the Garden; His endurance of indignity in the Arrest and in the Trials, first before the High Priest, and afterwards before the Roman Governor; and His Sufferings at Calvary. We have dealt elsewhere with the Agony in the Garden, and therefore take up the narrative at the coming of Judas and the soldiers. Before doing so, something should be said of the chronology of the Crucifixion, and of the characters principally concerned in the Trial and Death of our Lord.

Definition of
the Passion.

In the *Prayer*
before the
Passion.

The year B.C. 1 is reckoned as coinciding with the year 753 A.U.C., and the year A.D. 1 with the year 754 A.U.C. On this reckoning, Tiberius became Cæsar August 19, A.D. 14, and reigned till March 16, A.D. 37; and Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee from B.C. 4 to A.D. 39. Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, after the deposition of Archelaus, in A.D. 6, were governed from Cæsarea by Roman procurators, of which Pontius Pilate was the fifth, following Valerius Gratus, and ruling as he did ten years, from A.D. 26 to the beginning of A.D. 36. It is not easy to fix the dates of our Lord's birth, ministry, and death, owing partly to the indifference of the early Christians to chronology, and partly to the vague notices given in the Gospels. Even the statement in

Of the Chrono-
logy.

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Luke iii. 23, that at His baptism "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age," merely shows that, according to Numbers iii. 3, 39, He had reached the canonical age for certain ritual acts. The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, referred to in Luke iii. 1, ran from August 19, A.D. 28 to August 19, A.D. 29, in which year John the Baptist began his preaching in the wilderness, and in the course of which Christ was baptized. The date of the baptism and the beginning of the public ministry of our Lord may be therefore fairly set in the spring of the year A.D. 29. From the statements in St. Luke of the census under Quirinius, and in St. Matthew of the appearance of the star to the Magi and the slaughter of the Innocents, attempts have been made to decide the exact year of the birth; but without satisfactory results. It occurred sometime between B.C. 7 and B.C. 4. Nor is there agreement as to the length of the ministry, whether it were one year or three years.

Of the length
of Christ's
Ministry.

For practical purposes, the length of the ministry of our Blessed Lord matters little or nothing. The reader desirous of examining closely into the question can find material for so doing in the articles on Chronology in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary* and the *Encyclo-*

pædia Biblica. That it contained two Passovers, beginning before the one and ending at the other, seems to be a safe conclusion. No dependence can be placed upon the theory that St. John refers to so many separate Passovers: his Gospel is not arranged on chronological principles, and he may have used the term indefinitely, without restricting it to any one year. Clement of Alexandria, writing about A.D. 194, declares of Christ "that it was necessary for Him to preach only a year, this also is written: 'He hath sent me to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' This both the prophet spake, and the Gospel." Origen says that the period of his teaching was short—"He taught somewhere about a year and a few months." An early tradition, dating back to the Gnostics of the second century, and perhaps to St Luke himself, limited the ministry to a single year; and no writer before Eusebius maintains a three to four years' ministry. On the other hand, Irenæus, influenced by the question, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" argues that the ministry lasted upwards of fifteen or twenty years—a conjecture stamped by impossibility.

Stromata:
lib. i. cap.
xxi.

De Principiis
lib. iv. § 5.

Against
Heresies: cap.
xxii. § 5.

If, then, the ministry began in the spring of A.D. 29, and lasted a year, the Crucifixion

Date of the
Crucifixion.

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happened in the Passover season of A.D. 30. In that year the astronomical new moon occurred at 8.08 P.M., March 22, so that the first Nisan may have been put on Friday, March 24, and the fifteenth Nisan on Friday, April 7. It is true that the astronomical data show that A.D. 29 and A.D. 33 would also satisfy the Gospel evidence for the date of the Crucifixion ; but A.D. 30 best meets all requirements. Some scholars, indeed, who hold that the ministry lasted three or four years, agree upon this date, and make their reckoning consistent by taking the fifteenth year of Tiberius to have been A.D. 26. Absolute certainty is out of the question.

Pontius Pilate. Assuming the night of the betrayal and arrest to have been Thursday, April 6, A.D. 30, we find that Pontius Pilate had been procurator of Judea about four years. So hostile and deep-seated is the feeling against him, on the part of both Jews and Christians—the former on account of several acts of gross atrocity, and of setting their religious scruples at defiance, and the latter because of his connexion with the trial and death of Jesus—that it is difficult to form a correct estimate of his character. The verdict against him is almost a foregone conclusion. Of his origin we know nothing. His first name, by which

he was called in his own household, is forgotten, and from the two which have come down nothing definite can be learned. "Pontius" suggests a connexion with the famous Samnite family of the Pontii; and "Pilate" may have been derived either from *pileatus*, "wearing the *pilleus* or felt cap of the manumitted slave," which would imply the taint of slavery in the history of his family, or from *pilatus*, "armed with the pike,"—which is the more likely. A Roman citizen, probably born in Italy, he belonged to the middle or equestrian class in the community, and he must have held a series of appointments, as well as a prefecture in the army, before he became qualified for the post of procurator. The earliest age at which he could be advanced to this office was twenty-seven, so that his birth could not have been later than B.C. 1.

Philo Judæus, writing to Caligula in the name of Herod Agrippa I., describes Pontius Pilate as of "an unbending and recklessly hard character," and he charges him with "corruptibility, violence, robberies, ill-treatment of the people, cruelty, continuous executions without even the form of a trial, and his never-ending, gratuitous, and most grievous inhumanities." According to Josephus, the Emperor left Pilate and his predecessor so long

Ency. Biblia,
iii. 3772.

Some rumours
against Pilate.
The autho-
rities are given
e.g. in *Ency.*
Biblia, and in
Hastings,
under Art.
"Pilate."

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in office "because he thought that governors acted like flies upon the body of a wounded animal: if once they were gorged, they would become more moderate in their exactions, whereas new men began their rapacious proceedings afresh." But both Philo and Josephus must be read with caution. The accusations against Pilate were not without foundation, but something may be said on his side. As a Pagan and a Roman, of social position, military rank, and political influence, he was probably indifferent and superior to the religious ideas and practices of the people under his government, and endeavoured only, so far as possible, to reconcile the contending factions, and thereby maintain peace. He had a task of tremendous and exasperating difficulty. Judea was one of the most turbulent provinces in the empire. Its powerful and well organized priesthood, while professing loyalty, was never reluctant to foment rebellion. Its natives were to be found in every city of the empire, for the most part influential, if not wealthy, always in compact with each other, and ready to contribute both men and money for the freedom of Judea. To the Jew, religion and politics were practically the same thing. He wanted neither foreign princes nor foreign gods, and with all the fervour of his soul he hated both.

Centuries of oppression, the cruelties of which will never be told, taught him that compromise was as useless as it was wicked. With such a people Pilate could scarcely hope to be a favourite. He could rule only with the sword and a rod of iron, which would be termed tyranny, or with a duplicity and craft which in the end would prove far more injurious.

He got his first experience of the intractable temper of the Jews, and an indication of the extent to which they would go for the sake of their religious scruples, soon after his accession to office. Josephus is the authority for the story. To avoid occasion for irritation, it had become the custom under earlier procurators that troops entering Jerusalem should not carry flags having on them the figure of the Emperor. Such tolerance appeared to Pilate unworthy weakness, and he allowed some soldiers to enter the city by night with the offensive standards. When the news spread among the people, large numbers of them went down to Cæsarea, and for five days gathered before the palace of the procurator, and pleaded that the objectionable images might be withdrawn. On the sixth day the malcontents were surrounded by a detachment of soldiers, but the Jews remained steadfast, bared their

One of the charges against Pilate.

necks, and declared their readiness to die. There is no likelihood that a massacre was intended. Pilate discovered how far he could go, and the Jews had their way.

How Pilate
would
naturally
regard
Jesus.

To Pilate, aloof as he held himself from the religious life of Judea, except so far as it infringed upon the policy of his government, Christ was no more than a leader of another insurrection. Indeed He was so represented to him by the Jews themselves. When he discovered that He was not even that, in his desire to avoid trouble which might have resulted in riot and revolt, and to rid himself of another annoyance, he thought Him insignificant enough to sacrifice, not for justice's sake, but for the welfare of the community, or at least for the peace of the government. What was a poorly clad and friendless peasant from Galilee to an anxious and burdened Roman governor? If a wrong were done, was it not to prevent a greater evil? Moreover, this accused Teacher was not a Roman citizen. In the eyes of an imperial official, He was only a subject, a mere slave; and it should be remembered to Pilate's credit that he did try to save His life. That Pilate erred, even from a Roman point of view, in giving way to a clamouring populace, and in suppressing

from fear his readiness to release an innocent Man, is true; but Pilate knew something of Jewish obstinacy and the risk of endangering the peace of the empire. In letting Jesus go he would disturb his own future prospects, perhaps his own life. The Evangelists neither reproach him nor condemn him. They leave his acts to speak for themselves. Later, his name is used simply as a time-mark, to indicate the date of the death of Christ.

That Pilate sent a report to Rome of the trial and condemnation of Jesus Christ is of course possible; and Justin Martyr, writing about A.D. 148, refers for confirmation of his account of the Crucifixion to a work entitled the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*, evidently well known, and containing regular accounts of the proceedings of the procurator. This work is supposed to have been destroyed at an early period, perhaps in consequence of the appeals made to it by the Christians. An imitation appeared in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, about the end of the fourth century—of no historical value whatever. Tertullian, writing in 197, reiterates the tradition that such a report was sent to Rome; and before the end of the second century there was extant a *Letter of Pontius Pilate to the Emperor*, in which the governor himself recounts the story of Christ,

Did Pilate
report his
action to
Rome?
First Apology:
cap. xxxv.

Apology:
cap. xxi.

and versions of which, undoubtedly interpolated, have come down to us. The only worth that these documents have is in the evidence they afford of the kindly feeling of the age in which they were written towards Pontius Pilate. The governor is indeed made to say that had he not been afraid of the rising of a sedition among the people, who were just on the point of breaking out, the life of Christ might have been spared; but this fear of consequences is the only thing brought against him, and in some of the earliest apocryphal writings he is practically acquitted of all blame. Tertullian went so far as to declare that he was a Christian in his own convictions; and much later an unknown writer, after describing his condemnation by the Emperor for the execution of Christ, records Pilate's prayer to Christ for forgiveness, and goes on to say:—"When Pilate had finished his prayer, there came a voice out of the heaven, saying: 'All the generations and families of the nations shall count thee blessed, because under thee have been fulfilled all those things said about me by the prophets; and thou thyself shalt be seen as my witness at my second appearing, when I shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, and those that have not owned my name.' And the Prefect struck

off the head of Pilate ; and, behold, an angel of the Lord received it. And his wife Procla, seeing the angel coming and receiving his head, being filled with joy herself also, immediately gave up the ghost, and was buried along with her husband." The Coptic Church commemorates Pilate as a saint and martyr on June 25th, and on October 27th the Greek Church reveres the memory of his wife.

In later ages the tide turned against the Roman procurator. All that history knows of him, after the condemnation of our Lord, is that, in the spring of A.D. 36, complaints were made to Vitellius, the newly appointed legate of Syria, within whose jurisdiction Judea fell, that Pilate had been guilty of harshness in the suppression of a fanatical movement among the Samaritans. So many insurrectionists had been put to death, that the legate suspended Pilate and ordered him to Rome for examination. Before he reached the city, Tiberius died, and the trial probably never took place. Pilate disappeared from the pages of history, to live in legendary lore. The kindlier estimate of his character having passed away, tradition told of the evil end which came to him. Full of remorse at the injustice and cowardice which led him to condemn the innocent Christ, some said that he committed

Later legends
of Pontius
Pilate.

For legends,
etc., of Pilate,
see, e.g.,
Schürer's
Jewish People.
Div. i. vol. ii.
pp. 87, 88.

suicide, and others that he was executed by order of the Emperor. His body could not rest in the Tiber : demons and ghosts haunted the spot, and struck the people in the neighbourhood with fright. It was taken to Vienne, in the south of France, and sunk in the Rhone. The same troubles ensued, and the body was removed and dropped into a deep pit in the neighbourhood of Lausanne. It was soon discovered that the body lay in the lake on the side of Mount Pilatus, opposite Lucerne, whence it was said to emerge periodically and appear in the act of washing its hands. It is deserving of note, that Dante found no place for Pilate in the Inferno.

The Sect of
Sadducees.

Next to the Procurator, and in some respects more important than he, was Annas, son of Sethi, who, under the appointment of Quirinius, legate of Syria, had served as High Priest from A.D. 6 to A.D. 15, when, on the coming into the procuratorship of Valerius Gratus, he either resigned or was deposed. Like most of the priests, and all who attained office in the Temple hierarchy, he belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, which, whatever its origin and history, now stood theologically for rationalism and negation. In opposition to the Pharisees, the members of this school of thought denied the resurrection, personal

immortality, retribution in a future life, the existence of angels, spirits, and demons, the theory of predestination or fate, and probably all the Hebrew scriptures outside the Torah. Only in the aristocratic, wealthy, and well-to-do classes—that is to say, in the priestly families—had this worldly and materialistic sect a following. There were indeed priests who were not Sadducees, but they were of lowly origin and poor condition; and there were rich men likewise, but in Jerusalem they seem to have been few in number. The Sadducees, differing again from the Pharisees, were given to politics rather than to piety or devotion. To hold power, however, they were frequently obliged to accommodate themselves to the views of the Pharisees and the common people; and, having few definite religious principles of their own, they easily assumed an indifference, or at least an agnostic superiority, towards doctrine and ritual. So they sat in the Sanhedrin with members of other sects, and to carry out their own purposes, where no interference with those purposes was evident, helped their opponents to carry out theirs. They formed a small, compact, well-organized body, scarcely known outside of Jerusalem, rarely adding to their numbers, rich enough to have their way, and

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carefully retaining to themselves the high priesthood. The character of Annas may be divined from the fact that his was the leading spirit in the sect.

Annas, the ex-High Priest, the most powerful man in Jerusalem.

The Roman authorities succeeded in winning him over to themselves, or at least in quieting any antipathy he may have been supposed to entertain, and by their means, by his own unscrupulous and over-reaching policy, and by his command of immense financial resources, he continued through a long life to maintain an unrivalled position in Jerusalem. A stronger force off the pontifical throne than on, he contrived that of the three men who within as many years succeeded him, one should have been his son ; until in A.D. 18 the office was given to his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, who remained High Priest till A.D. 36, when, about the same time that Pontius Pilate was removed, Vitellius appointed Jonathan, another son of Annas. Altogether eight members of this family held the office within the sixty-four years from Annas's appointment to the Destruction of Jerusalem.

The unpopularity of Annas and his family.

Both Annas and his family were execrated by the people. Their enormous wealth was derived from the control of the market for materials for sacrifice. For this business, among other places, booths or bazaars were

established within the precincts of the Temple ; and by these means the House of God was changed into a den of thieves. The chicanery and extortion here practised set the people against the family of Annas, and probably our Lord never attained greater popularity than by driving out of the Temple court the money-changers and the sellers of sheep and doves. Undoubtedly with hearty good will the crowd of lookers-on joined Him in His work. "Woe to the house of Annas!" was the cry from many lips. The sons of Eli were no worse than were the sons of Annas. Besides their arrogance, they were charged with licentiousness and a shameless perversion of justice. Josephus brings against them and their father the special sin of "whispering," or hissing like vipers, which Edersheim interprets to mean private influence on the judges, whereby "morals were corrupted, judgement perverted, and the Shekinah withdrawn from Israel." Annas himself, astute and masterful, brooked no opposition. Every priest and servitor about the Temple was appointed by him, or by those who did his bidding.

*Jesus the
Messiah: i.
263.*

To a man such as this, and to men such as these, religion was but a pretence to selfish ends, and worse than all else that Jesus of Nazareth did was His interference with the

*To Annas
business
came first.*

traffic carried on in the outer court of the Temple. More important than the regeneration of Israel were the monopolies of the house of Annas. Later on, St. Paul found himself at Ephesus confronted with the same question of interference with business. Demetrius and the silversmiths cannot allow the industry by which he and his fellow-craftsmen gained their wealth to be broken up. Nor could Annas. Probably, in his heart, the old aristocratical and unbelieving priest smiled at the earnestness of the Pharisees in their railing against Christ. He had little interest in the objections they had against an opponent of their doctrines; and still less did he care for visions of a future which this Man was said to indulge in, and in which no Sadducee believed. As to freedom from Rome and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, that would involve the downfall of Sadducean power. The sect kept its hold on Jerusalem because Rome found it helpful. For all Annas cared, Jesus might be the Messiah, or anything else He chose, so long as he left the Annas booths and stalls alone. The popular feeling against them was already strong, and must not be further excited. This Man would ruin a trade, which, if not strictly innocent, was at least exceedingly lucrative. Therefore He must be removed.

Thus, if Pilate wanted peace, Annas wanted money; and in every age cupidity is more powerful and less hesitating than all other motives, good or bad, put together. The love of money is the root of all evil; and money is the readiest and surest means of carrying out wrong. Unless we misunderstand the man, Annas will make every effort possible, and spend of his wealth, to rid the city of this Reformer of Galilee.

Annas first among the persecutors of Jesus.

Annas appears once more as the head of the chiefs of the Sanhedrin in its action against the Apostles, after the miracle had been wrought by St. Peter on the lame man at the Gate Beautiful. That he is there called the High Priest suggests that his influence was paramount in Israel, though years had gone by since he actually held that office. The control of affairs by the Annas family is shown in this gathering of the Council: "Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest." History affords no further information concerning Annas, but in the *Acts of Philip*, a work of the second or third century, his unhappy ending is told, and as he descended into Hades after the manner of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, so may he be found in a moat in

His after-history.

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the sixth bolgia of the eighth circle of the Inferno.

Caiaphas the
High Priest.

Joseph, surnamed Caiaphas, whose wife was a daughter of Annas, had been High Priest for twelve or thirteen years when Jesus was brought before him for trial. Less cunning and cool than Annas, but, as became a Sadducee, not lacking in obsequiousness and adroitness sufficient to retain office longer than any other of the nineteen high priests in the seventy years before the Fall of Jerusalem, he readily, though of course unostentatiously, gave his influence to the carrying out of the wishes of his father-in-law. By virtue of his position, he presided over the Sanhedrin—the supreme native court, as Schürer tells us, to which belonged all those judicial matters and all those measures of an administrative character which either could not be competently dealt with by the inferior local courts, or which the Roman procurator had not specially reserved for himself. The Council had jurisdiction in civil and to some extent in criminal cases. It could not carry out the sentence of death, unless the sentence were ratified by the procurator; but the procurator was expected to regulate his judgement in accordance with Jewish law, where it was possible for him to do so. The powers of the President of the

*History of
the Jewish
People: II. i.
185.*

Council were undoubtedly extensive. Moreover, the High Priest was the political head of the nation. In the hands of a capable man, or under the administration of a weak man held in control by a masterful spirit, the high priesthood could be made a means of arbitrary and almost irresponsible government. Traditions added to the majesty of the office. It was the interest of the people to hold loyally to the policy of the only man whom the Roman authorities regarded as representative, and it was no less the interest of the Roman authorities to keep on good terms with one behind whom the people stood. Caiaphas therefore held the key to the social, political, and ecclesiastical situation in Judea. Annas, indeed, controlled him, as it may be suspected Annas undertook to control the procurator himself; but that did not lessen his importance.

As an aristocrat and a Sadducee, Caiaphas had little sympathy with the Pharisees. Asceticism, which was the leading principle of this sect or school, had no attractions for such as he. The "Brethren" or the "Neighbours," as the Pharisees called themselves, assuming themselves to be the strict observers of the law, and therefore the true Israelites, not only adopted the written law, but also the oral or traditional law, and they spared themselves no

The Sect of
Pharisees.

pains and privations in the punctual fulfilment of both. They held that he who interprets Scripture in opposition to tradition has no part in the world to come. Josephus says that the Pharisees did not allow themselves to oppose the injunctions of those who preceded them in age. They were conservatives and literalists, in an extreme sense. With politics they had little directly to do; their purposes were almost entirely religious. They renounced the enjoyments of life, and in no particular surrendered themselves to comfort. Their name, which means "separated"—whether set apart from the mass of the people, or from all uncleanness or illegality, is not clear—was used by their enemies in an opprobrious sense, which sense, not altogether justly, is still retained. As the Sadducees proceeded from the ranks of the priests, so the Pharisees came from among the scribes and lawyers, the scholars or learned men whose calling in life it was to make a special study of the law, both scriptural and traditional. In other words, the Pharisees belonged to the literary class in the community; the Sadducees to the aristocratical and governing class. Naturally the two schools gradually differentiated themselves, as the one became absorbed in a study and mode of life for which the other cared

nothing, until along the lines of demarcation bitterness prevailed, only to be lessened when some common interest chanced to present itself. The Pharisees seem to have been more scattered through the country than the Sadducees, though probably at no time did they exceed in number six thousand—a fragment of the community.

Agreement between Christ and the Pharisees was impossible. He had a strong dislike for their asceticism, their method and subjects of teaching, and their professions of superior righteousness. On the question of the law He and they were altogether at odds. It is true that He emphatically declared that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He even pronounced him great in the kingdom of heaven who should teach men to keep the law. But He proceeded to interpret the sayings of old time with a freedom and in a way that to a traditionalist must have appeared thoroughly destructive. Not only did He set aside quibbles and accommodations, and the mass of customs and conclusions which had been derived therefrom, but in some instances, as in the case of divorce, the taking of oaths, and the treatment of enemies, He pronounced against the law. In this He opposed the leading principle of a sect which held that the

The opposition of the Pharisees to Christ.

Matt. v. 17-48.

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colour and fashion of a phylactery and the preservation of human life were of equal authority, being ordained of God ; and which sect troubled little about the motives and thoughts of a man so long as he kept the outward observances. Who was this Nazarene that He should denounce precepts and practices regarded as sacred for generations, and supported by the wisdom of the ablest men in Israel ? Nor was the feeling against Him lessened by His claim to the Messiahship. From their point of view such pretensions savoured as much of folly as of irreverence. No despiser of the law could possibly be the Restorer of Israel. And yet the Man could not be passed by in silence—at least so it seemed to some of the Pharisees : for it is not to be supposed that the sect generally knew or troubled itself about Him. But they who did left unused few opportunities of disputing with Him, while, on the other hand, their formalism, bigotry, and casuistry laid them open to the most terrible denunciations ever uttered against a religious society. The scorn and ridicule with which Christ treated them was not likely to soften their prejudices against Him. “Except your righteousness,” He said to His disciples, “shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,

ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

With the causes of the antagonism shown by the Pharisees to Christ, Caiaphas had next to nothing to do. Had he known those causes he would have kept his opinion and gratification to himself. All that he cared for was that the scribes and Pharisees hated the Nazarene as thoroughly as did the priests and Sadducees. It suited the purposes of both that the Disturber should be silenced. At a gathering of the chief priests and Pharisees, while they were perplexed at the growing popularity of Christ, which had been increased by the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Caiaphas without realizing the import of his words, and in utter disregard of justice and religion, advised a drastic remedy: "Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." Hesitation came to an end the moment that the High Priest pronounced this opinion. "From that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death." They met in the court of the High Priest, and "consulted how they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him."

These were the kind of men, these the two great sects, and such their principles and

Caiaphas found the Pharisees in sympathy with the Sadducees against Christ.

Origen held that the conspiracy was the result of envy excited over the multitudes which followed Jesus into the wilderness.
Con. Cel. : lib. iii. cap. x.

John xi. 49-53.

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motives, against which our Blessed Lord was called to contend. Commercialism and bigotry, selfish and unbridled beyond their wont, set themselves the task of ridding the world of its Teacher and Redeemer. Nevertheless we reiterate the opinion, that only a handful of these principal men, though to be sure the most important handful, was concerned in the plot against Christ. They bound Israel to their crime; but Israel did not commit the act. Needless to say, Caiaphas met with little consideration at the hands of the makers and tellers of legends. In the same bolgia of the Inferno where his father-in-law was cast, Dante represents him fastened by three stakes to the ground, crosswise and naked, for all who pass that way to walk over.

The fate of
Caiaphas.

The Essenes.

Besides the Pharisees and Sadducees there was a third sect, the Essenes, who though not in the synagogue, as were the former sects, were nevertheless strict observers of Jewish law, though in some particulars they were followers of foreign thought and custom. Indeed, some scholars regard them as holding an intensified or exaggerated form of Pharisaism. They had naught to do with the persecution of Christ. Though numerous and

The literature
on the Essenes
is enormous.
For opposing
views see Dr.
Ginsburg and
Bp. Lightfoot.

widespread, they are not mentioned in the Gospel narrative. They lived in community, practised celibacy, observed rules such as are usual in monastic orders, employed frequent lustrations, wore white garments, and, though professing devotion to the person and books of Moses, repudiated both the priesthood and ritual sacrifices, and are said to have been absorbed in theosophical speculations, with a decided leaning to Eastern mysticism. As they bound themselves by terrible oaths to secrecy about their doctrines, and withdrew as much as possible from all contact with the world, it is difficult to discover exactly what they believed or what were the rules of their conduct. But they who have studied this austere and mysterious sect agree in according to them a wonderful energy and unflinching devotion in their effort to propagate that which seems to have been the cardinal principle of their society—love to God, to virtue, and to man. Philo of Alexandria, writing before A.D. 20, gives a sketch of these people, in which he speaks of their love of agricultural pursuits, their purity, industry, and simplicity of life, their avoidance of oaths and falsehood, their faith in God, their indifference to money, worldly influence, and pleasure, their care of the aged and sick, and their community

of goods. Probably referring to Herod the Great, who had befriended the sect, Philo says that the most cruel and deceitful tyrants, who had been the scourge of their country, had yet been moved to admiration of their quiet but invincible freedom, of their common meals, of their consummate fellowship. Josephus is no less clear and positive in his praise. He honours their self-restraint in anger, their faithfulness, their peace-making, and their truthfulness.

Did the
Essenes con-
tribute to
Christianity?

So like have monasticism and asceticism been in all ages and countries and under all forms of religious faith, that one is tempted to conclude there may be a connexion between the Essenes and Christianity. If there be such, it is rather in the mode of life than in the religious or moral doctrines held. In vain have some contended that John the Baptist was an Essene, and that our Lord derived much of His belief and some of His rules of conduct from them. Even though some early Christians attempted the experiment of a community of goods, they may not have taken their idea from these people. Nor need Christian monasticism have looked to them for suggestions. It is, however, deserving of notice that one great sect of Judaism did not take part in the tragedy of Calvary.

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Nothing could more plainly show the power of Christ's teaching and the alarm it gave the leaders of Israel than their efforts to obtain possession of His person, and their determination to kill Him. Setting aside whatever sense of propriety they may have had, and anxious to avoid the disturbance which undoubtedly would have arisen had they attempted to seize Him in public, they accepted the services of a spy and traitor. For a trifling reward, one of His own disciples arranged to discover Him and hand Him over in the night time. The chief priests, who were all Sadducees and belonged to the "Temple-party," and some leaders among the Pharisees, laid as much of their project before the Roman governor as was necessary to bring him over to their scheme; and that the arrest might be legally made, and trouble quelled should there be such, they obtained a company of soldiers.

These soldiers, under their captain, set out, guided by Judas, accompanied by servants from the high priest's palace, some priests, scribes, and elders, and followed by a rabble curious to know the purpose in hand. Not only were the soldiers armed, but others had lanterns and torches, some placed on the top of poles, to prevent any concealment on the part of

The arrest determined on.

The night-march to Gethsemane.

Him for whom they were in search. Probably they went first to the upper room where Jesus was gathered with the disciples when Judas received the sop, and went out into the night on his foul errand. Not finding Him there, the traitor led them to the garden well known to him, over the ravine of the Cedars, where Jesus was wont to resort with His disciples. The paschal moon shone calm and white upon the walls and pinnacles of the city, into the depths of the valley, and on the hillsides,—the imperturbability of Nature to all things human ; the voices and footfalls of the company, though controlled as much as possible, were carried on by the wind ; the enemies of Jesus rejoiced in the prospect of soon having in their hands the Disturber of Israel ; and in the depths of the traitor's heart, fiends were making ready the torment that worse than wolf or fire should ere long gnaw and burn his wretched soul.

The Discovery
of Jesus, and
the treachery
of Judas.

In the meanwhile the Lord Jesus was enduring the Agony beneath the trees of Gethsemane, and, as unconscious of their companion's perfidy and shame as of their Master's distress, the disciples slept—the three who had gone with Him into the garden, and the eight whom He had left near the gate. Suddenly He heard the noise and saw the lights

of the approaching multitude. Awaking those disciples who were near Him, and rejoining the others, He cried, "Rise, let us be going : behold he is at hand that doth betray me." The words were scarcely uttered, when the soldiers and the multitude reached the entrance to the garden. The search at once began. Men with their torches and lanterns ran hither and thither. Escape was impossible even had it been contemplated. Lest in the confusion, the soldiers, who did not know Christ, and whose business alone it was to apprehend Him, should miss Him, Judas had given them a sign—the sign with which a scholar sometimes greeted his master ; and now, within the glare of the flambeaux, casting shame aside, as he had already cast honour and gratitude, he advanced to his Lord, and with a show of reverence exclaimed, "Hail, Rabbi !" and eagerly and effusively kissed Him. According to one tradition, Christ repulsed Him with the question, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss ?" According to another, He said, "Comrade, is this that for which thou art come ?"

Turning from him, as though he were too contemptible for further notice, our Blessed Lord walked towards the soldiers, and de-

Christ
addresses
himself to the
soldiers.

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manded the authority for their intrusion by the question, "Whom are ye seeking?" Probably neither officer nor men knew more than that they were sent to arrest One who was reported to be a mischief-maker, a menace to the community, a worker of wonders, and an ally of supernatural beings. The kiss had made Him known to them, and yet, face to face with Him, and fearing to say "Thee," the soldier in charge replied "Jesus the Nazarene." Superstition and awe for the moment got the better of these men. As with one impulse, perhaps dreading that his serenity and courage presaged a display of destructive power, those in front moved back at His declaration, "I am he," and in their haste pushed their comrades behind them to the ground. There was nothing strange or uncommon in this, as some have supposed. Had it been a miracle, there would have been no arrest; and had it been sufficient to have attracted attention, the tradition would have been told by more than one Evangelist. The stumblers soon recovered themselves. As the hubbub subsided, He again asked them, "Whom seek ye?" Again the one in authority answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." Nothing happened hurtful to them. "I have told you," said the Master, "that I am he"; and then, care-

John xviii. 3-6.

ful of His disciples, that He should lose none which the Father had given Him, He added "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

The soldiers had no instructions concerning the men who were with Him. He, only, was the object of their search. The disciples, however, were not without courage. They remembered that two of them were armed, possibly they may have supposed for this very purpose, and not simply against robbers who infested the roads about Jerusalem, especially at Passover time and in the night. When they saw what would follow they cried, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" Apparently without waiting for a reply, Peter drew the sword he had, and, rushing forward, struck and cut off the right ear of the servant of the high priest, Malchus by name, perhaps the leader of the Jewish intruders, and one of the noisiest and most virulent of them. But innocence was not thus to be vindicated; indeed, resistance would best help those who were doing the wrong. According to evidence which St. Luke thought satisfactory, but which the other Evangelists do not mention, Christ said, most likely addressing his captors, "Suffer ye thus far," forgive this outburst of zeal, or free my arms for a moment—and, touching

The Disciples made an effort at defence.

Luke xxii. 38.

All the Evangelists record St. Peter's valour: which ought to be remembered against his denial.

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the ear of the wounded man, He healed him. It is difficult to understand why this gracious deed had so little influence, if it had any at all, either on the soldiers or on Malchus and his friends. St. John alone gives the name of the disciple who struck the blow.

The differences in the narratives on this point, of little moment.

Both St. Matthew and St. John record that Christ said to the disciple, "Put up again thy sword into the sheath"; but they differ as to the words which follow. According to St. John He added, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" According to St. Matthew, He went on to say, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" In the Eastern mind a legion meant a large gathering of armed men orderly arranged, irrespective of exact numbers; and an army of angels, such as our Lord spoke of, therefore stood for an irresistible force. But had He made demand for such, as St. Matthew asks, "How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" The noise and confusion in the garden made it difficult for any one person to hear all that was said: hence the different reports. Substantially, however, the reports agree; and all the utterances may

have been made. As He had refused power at the price offered by Satan in the Temptation in the wilderness, so now again He refuses to avail Himself of help, which, while it might have saved Him from death, would also have prevented His Sacrifice and frustrated His purpose of saving man from sin. His rebuke has been quoted oftentimes against the use of violence or force in the defence or propagation of the Faith, and indeed against war under any circumstances.

The attempt at defence made by Peter did not help. The soldiers seized and bound the Master. Their violence and rudeness, the ignominy of the fettering, the injustice of His own countrymen, and the underhandedness of the whole enterprise, aroused His indignation; and therein, it would seem, showed how perfectly human He was. Flesh and blood could not endure such treatment without remonstrance. To the chief priests, captains of the Temple, and elders, He said, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the Temple, and ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." The chances were all against Him. Not only had His enemies the night in their favour, when the people

Our Lord
provoked to
anger.

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who heard Him so gladly knew not what was going on, but they had also with them the terrible strength of malignancy and jealousy, sin wrought up to its worst pitch. They were shameless, and even had the soldiers understood what He said, for Him there was neither rescue nor pity.

The Disciples went away,—according to the tradition followed by Matthew and Mark.

The disciples had done all that they could do. If the soldiers had feared some wreaking of His wrath on them, the disciples may have wondered why He who had shown power at other times should now be powerless. Perhaps after all He was not the Messiah: for Satan not only strengthens the opposition to the righteous man, but also insinuates distrust and creates alienation in the hearts of his friends. At any rate it was both useless and dangerous to linger. So they forsook Him, and fled.

The curiosity and courage of youth.

That is to say, some of them, probably all the disciples. But St. Mark tells us of a certain young man, who, as the band of soldiers were leading the Master away, followed Him. The noise had wakened the youth, and, clad only in a loose linen wrapper or night robe, he hastened to the scene of the disturbance. Probably recognizing the prisoner to be Jesus of Nazareth, he would see what would happen. He made his way into the company; but

either because of his singular attire, which in the moonlight or the flare of torches must have seemed uncanny, or because he endeavoured to obstruct the removal of the Teacher, he was seized by the guards. But leaving his garment in their hands, he slipped away naked. Conjecture has been brave, but there is no possibility of discovering who the youth was.

Tradition has ventured to think he was the Evangelist himself. St. Chrysostom supposed him to have been St. John.

So they led Him away bound, down into the valley of the Kedron, and up the road towards the city. A few days earlier, with His disciples He had sat on the heights of Olivet, and against the western sky, in the evening light, beheld the glorious buildings of Jerusalem. To the men from Galilee it seemed wonderful—"Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!" His eyes rested on the Temple, more beautiful and grand then than at any time in its history, with the four massive towers of Antonia to the north, and behind these noble structures the magnificent palace of Herod surrounded by its groves of trees and luxurious gardens. Stretching to the south lay the houses and homes of the people, in parts ranged tier above tier, and here and there adorned with buildings which by their size

The March back to the city.

Mark xiii. 1, 3; the disciples would show him over the Temple, and one of them said this, "As he went out of the Temple."

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and grace indicated the taste and wealth of their owners. Beyond the walls, far to the north, in the fresh green country, were villas and gardens. The whole made a panorama as splendid and wonderful as anything earth has ever known: a city coveted by the alien and beloved by the Jew, built on hills hallowed by a nation's history: a city over which Jesus wept.

A night like
that in which
Nicodemus
came to Jesus.

Now the shadows fell upon the path along which tied as a prisoner the Son of Man was being led. In the silent city men slept, except those whose work it was to watch and pray and weep, or, as it this night happened, to plot. It was now long past midnight. The soldiers hurried Him through the narrow and windy streets to the palace where Annas awaited Him. Here we may suppose the Roman band left Him in the custody of the retainers of the High Priest.

Christ taken
to Annas.

Though not actually the High Priest, the authority, as we have seen, was really in the hands of Annas. The order for the arrest probably came from him, and he desired to examine for himself the Man who threatened so grievously to interfere with his sources of revenue, and, without betraying the motive of his persecution, if possible to discover some plausible charge against Him. The crafty

and experienced old priest therefore asked Jesus of His disciples and of His teaching. In what particulars did He break with the traditions of His people? Why had He endeavoured to establish a new school of religion? What were the principles He sought to instil in the minds of His followers? How could He excuse the harsh things He had said of the scribes and priests? And who were the men, and how many, who sympathized with Him in this strange, though possibly praiseworthy, undertaking? Questions such as these we can understand were put with all the suavity, gentleness, and official condescension that Annas could so well assume. For the nonce his attitude was that of a great dignitary remonstrating for his good with one far beneath him in rank, at whose wilfulness and ignorance he was surprised and annoyed. Not that he purposed any kindness to this Revolutionary from Galilee. From the answers something might be gathered upon which the Council when it met could formulate a charge. But his Prisoner saw through the man, and refused to enter into explanations which could only have served to further the purposes against Him, and which so far as Annas was concerned would have been beside

Christ refuses
to discuss His
mission.

L

the mark. He repudiated the insinuation that He had either formed a secret society or taught secret doctrines. "I have spoken openly to the world," He said; "I ever taught in synagogues, and in the Temple, where all the Jews come together; and in secret spake I nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them that have heard me, what I spake unto them: behold, these know the things which I said."

Courtesy
lacking even
in the presence
of Israel's
most powerful
priest.

The answer practically demanded that His interlocutor should bring forward his witnesses rather than seek in an illegal manner to incriminate his Prisoner. Jesus was no conspirator against either Israel or Rome. No one who had heard Him could charge Him with wrong: if they could, let them testify openly against Him. Though perfectly fair and according to law, to the servants of Annas such a reply appeared audacious. Annas still retained the title of the office he so long kept within his family, much as by courtesy a king without a kingdom or a bishop without a bishopric keeps his. One of the officers standing by, a servant like unto his master, struck Jesus, either with a rod or with his hand, and exclaimed, "Answerest thou the High Priest so?" Moved as a man would be by such indignity, and conscious

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of His own innocence and the injustice of His enemies, Christ replied, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil : but if well, why smitest thou me ? "

Annas had gained nothing in this interview. So he sent Him bound unto Caiaphas. The palace of Caiaphas is thought to have been some distance from that of Annas ; and while the Lord Jesus was at the house of the latter, in the house of Caiaphas sufficient members of the Sanhedrin were called together to form a committee of enquiry. They were probably picked men, close partisans of Annas and Caiaphas, ready to follow their lead and further their wishes, and not like Nicodemus, and probably many other members of the Sanhedrin, inclined to think and act for themselves.

THE TRIAL :
I. Before
Caiaphas.

Before this improvised council, rather than before the Sanhedrin properly assembled and open to all its members, held at Caiaphas's own residence, and not in the "Hall of Hewn-stones" at the Temple, where the Sanhedrin usually met, was Jesus brought. It was now near morning, though perhaps the sky scarcely showed the coming of day. In this conclave the procedure would not be likely to differ materially from that observed

A Committee
of the San-
hedrin
assessors with
the High
Priest.

in the meetings of the whole Council. As judges or assessors, the members sat in a semi-circle, so that they could see each other, with Caiaphas in their midst, presiding over the examination, and the secretaries of the court at either end. The accused was placed immediately before the High Priest, guarded by officers of the palace. Behind the accused and facing the tribunal stood the spectators. The great hall was open to vestibules and corridors, in which gathered servitors and guards.

Peter and
John get into
the Palace.

Among these servitors and guards, in one of the corridors or ante-chambers, were two of the disciples. They had recovered their fright, and Peter had followed afar off to the house of Annas. He did not go in, but waited without until joined by John. The two then walked in the rear of the procession on its way to the palace of Caiaphas. Here John entered the court, being known to the maid who kept the gate, some have supposed because he served the palace with fish. Later, missing his fellow-disciple, he went out and brought him in, vouching for him to the porteress. Then, unsuspected as a sympathizer with the Nazarene, he left Peter and went on into the hall where the Council was sitting. And soon Peter fell into trouble.

His ills did not come all at once or in unbroken succession, but were scattered over the time that the trial of Christ before Caiaphas was going on. However, to avoid interrupting the narrative of that trial, we may cluster together the incidents that happened to him.

The test of Peter.

Each Evangelist gives an account of the denials, but in detail they write independently of each other, and unless we interpret their accounts as referring to three occasions, in each of which Peter seems to have reiterated his ignorance, not once or twice, perhaps, but many times, as those several persons hearing the accusation joined in the charge and had to be silenced, there is no possibility of making these particulars exactly agree. The fact of the denial must have been widely known to have occasioned so many versions. This is an illustration of the principle we have insisted upon: that it is not necessary to the general truth that traditions concerning it should in every respect closely agree. Where there are several witnesses, they are bound to differ in their apprehension and description of the same event.

The fact of the denials certain: the harmony of the traditions open to conjecture.

The portress having doubtless received charge to keep out all persons likely to be

Peter's encounter with the Portress.

in sympathy with the Nazarene, notwithstanding John's word, had her suspicions of Peter. Perhaps his restlessness and excitement had something to do with this. She watched him as he went near the fire in the middle of the court, and now sat down with the servitors and now stood up with them; and the more she watched, the stronger became her doubts. Probably, a sturdy virago, as fit for rough work as any of the men who served with her, she had been an onlooker in the garden at the time of the arrest, and, without being sure, she felt that she had seen Peter there. Approaching the fire and looking earnestly upon him—as Tyndale says, she “sette goode eyesight on him,”—her suspicion became almost certainty. “Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?” His answer, “I am not,” did not satisfy her. She exclaimed aloud, “Thou wast with Jesus the Nazarene!” The attention of the group was at once turned to him. St. Peter was at his wits' end. Another moment and he might be arrested or maltreated. “Woman,” he cried, “I know him not! Neither understand I what thou sayest.” Some of the servants and officers repeated the woman's charge, “Art not thou also one of his disciples?” His answer was as emphatic

as before; and he walked away from the fire, across the court open to the sky, into the comparative gloom of one of the porches or corridors.

Some time passed by. No one seems to have troubled himself more about the suspicions of the portress; and Peter began to feel secure, and again ventured to move about. But either stirred by what the portress told her, or like the portress having been in the crowd that went with the soldiers to Gethsemane, another damsel, chancing to come into the group in which Peter now stood, cried, "This fellow was also with Jesus the Nazarene." No wonder Peter became alarmed. With an oath he exclaimed, "I do not know the man"; and to one who accused him directly with being one of the disciples, he declared, "Man, I am not!" Had he been wise he would have taken himself off; but his affection for his Master was greater than his prudence, and he wanted to see what would come of the trial.

The second accusation.

This may be a variant of the first accusation.

About an hour later Peter's difficulties began afresh. He again came out of the gloom into the light of the fire or the torches, and mingled with the servants and guards. As was his habit, he talked too much. He forgot his peril. The woman at the gate was not

The third accusation.

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satisfied, and she may have gone about telling others of her suspicions. Several of the servants hearing him said, "Surely thou also art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech bewrayeth thee." Unluckily one of the slaves, a kinsman to him whose ear Peter had cut off, recognized him: "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" Peter was indeed sorely put to it. "Then he began to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not this man of whom thou speakest.'"

The repentance of a good man.

At that moment a cock crew. Peter remembered. His eyes turned towards his Master in the great hall. Perhaps sounds of the dispute outside, and Peter's loud tones of repudiation rose above the voices within. Jesus looked, and Peter saw that look; and he went out—into the street, where the world was waking up to its daily toil—and wept bitterly.

The grace that saved Peter efficacious for others.

It may be that the Evangelists recorded this event in the life of the great disciple, who had won the crown of martyrdom when they wrote their Gospels, not so much to contribute to the story of the Passion of their beloved Redeemer, as to comfort others who in the stress of those early days had been tempted to deny their faith in Christ. Here was a prince among the Apostles who had fallen into weakness, and out of fear had declared him-

self free from all knowledge of his Lord. Yet had he found grace, repented, and returned to the discipleship to which he had been called. If St. Peter fell so grievously and yet recovered himself, there was no discouragement, but on the contrary great hope, for the man whose experience had been sad as his, and to whom restoration though longed for had not come. Moreover, they who looked askance upon returning disciples should remember, what had happened to one of the most ardent and devoted of the Twelve.

But for all that, we feel that Peter's denial did add to the sorrow of our Blessed Lord. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to conceive Christ losing consciousness of His Deity, seeing that His personality lay in the Divine nature, and not in the human; and yet, so it appears to us, He could not suffer and die as man if He realized that He was more than man. The knowledge of reserve power and happiness, infinite as all divine attributes must be, would have separated Him so entirely from the experience of humanity, that He never actually could have known the pains of body and mind to which flesh is heir. Mystery unexplainable though it is, if we are to believe in His perfect human nature, we must also believe that, however

The sin of
His disciple,
an added
sorrow to
Christ.

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otherwise it may have been in some of His earthly experiences, in the Passion He knew no more than other men know, and suffered in like manner as other men suffer. He could not therefore but grieve over the conduct of His disciple, even though He read Peter's character well enough to anticipate what Peter would do both in his fear and in his repentance. Peter obtained forgiveness, but the stain of the sin has never disappeared,—and that stain meant sorrow for Christ.

Our Lord's
respect for
the leaders
of Israel.

So in the trial now going on before the Council. It is the man Christ Jesus who stands there; and He stands there as man, though He is God. A devout and loyal Israelite, instructed in the sacred literature of His people and knowing well their wonderful history, He would look upon that august assembly of priests and scholars with respect and awe. Unfit as the man might be morally and spiritually, Caiaphas occupied the most exalted and the most revered office in Israel. He was a judge among judges, to represent the law and to administer justice, and among priests the first to offer sacrifice to Almighty God. The dignity may have been obtained by bribery or intrigue, and held by double-dealing, but still he had the dignity; and to it

reverence was a paramount duty. Even the coarse and brutal advice Caiaphas gave the Council, concerning the expediency of one man dying for the people so that the whole nation perish not, St. John interprets as a true prophecy uttered by him in his capacity of High Priest, though unaware of its import, that Christ should die not for Israel only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad. We may not, therefore, regard our Blessed Lord as standing before the Council in a defiant or indifferent mood or temper, but as a Man who realized both the honour and rank of His judges and the position He Himself was in, and feared the consequences which were fast coming upon Him; and yet had determined to accept those consequences, bear Himself bravely and irreproachably in all things, and make the Sacrifice the Council were so ready to force from Him.

It was necessary for the Council to formulate a charge against a prisoner, and to prove it, before a sentence to death could be obtained from the secular authority. Caiaphas and his coadjutors, therefore, diligently endeavoured to discover some evidence against Him for this purpose. No one could have

The search
for matter
to make an
indictment.

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helped them so well as he who had betrayed his Lord into their hands ; but Judas was not brought forward. Possibly the leaders in the conspiracy had no desire to acknowledge themselves as friends of a man whom they had employed as a spy. Nor did the Council wish to hear testimony in favour of One whom in their hearts they had doomed to death. Else they might have examined some of His adherents and friends. It was a curious case, in that no one dared to state the cause for which Christ was considered deserving of death. Caiaphas knew why he hated and condemned Him ; but it might cost more than his position to let such an unworthy and unpopular motive be known. So the search went on. Many witnesses came, but their witness agreed not together. There appeared to be nothing definite to lay hold of.

An illustration
of entangle-
ment in words.

John ii. 13-22.
St. John
records this
incident in
the early part
of his narra-
tive, probably
ignoring the
chronological
order of events.
Although
much differ-

At last, however, two men were brought before the court who were present on the occasion when Christ, having disturbed Annas's business, was asked for the authority by which He had driven out of the Temple the sheep and oxen, poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables. He had then replied, " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Neither the Jews nor His disciples at the time understood this enigmatical

saying. The former at once retorted, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?" He did not attempt to remove their misunderstanding. Many years later, in his Gospel St. John explained that Christ spoke of the temple of His body, and that when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this, and their faith was strengthened.

This incident was not forgotten by others. Witnesses affirmed, "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands." They did not, however, agree in their testimony. Nor was this exactly what He said. The charge was damaging, but not conclusive. To say anything against the Temple was regarded as blasphemy against God. In attacking the Temple, Christ had become a "corrupter" of the sacred institutions of Israel, of which the Temple was the chief; and such "corruption" the rabbinical law held was deserving of death. Besides, the words implied a suspicion, if not a conspiracy, that this Man was plotting the destruction of the sanctuary, which, both the pride of Israel and the centre of Israel's worship, and rebuilt by Herod, was even more splendid and spacious than the one built by Solomon.

ence of opinion exists, there is no necessity for supposing two cleansings of the Temple.

A flimsy charge on an enigma.

Mat. and Mk. alone record in the trial this use of Christ's words, given only in St. John's narrative: see Blunt's *Undesigned Coincidences*, p. 269.

Cf. Jer. xxvi.

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Could it have been proven that He had said and meant this, nothing more would have been necessary. Still, faulty as the evidence was, if it were carefully pieced together its cumulative force would not be altogether worthless : not quite enough strictly to condemn a man upon, but sufficient to show that He being both a disturber and blasphemer, it would be a gain to the community to have Him put out of the way.

Caiaphas puts the one question that Christ could not refuse to answer.

Probably impatient at the trend things were taking in favour of the Prisoner, or thinking that all had been said that need be said, Caiaphas rose from his seat, and addressing Jesus demanded, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" But the Man at his mercy held His peace. Explanation would have been useless. Nothing appeared to be left but for the High Priest to sum up the evidence, gather the opinions of the assessors, and pronounce judgement. Rather than doing this, however, he changed his tactics, and in words expressing the hope of Israel, worthless to him but dear to the Pharisees and to the overwhelming majority of the people, he put the question which he felt sure would draw out an answer : "I adjure thee by the living God, tell us, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

The question was unfair : according to law no one could be condemned on his own confession ; but the answer was clear enough. "I am ; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

Efforts seem to have been made earlier by some in the Council to secure this admission. "If thou art the Christ, tell us" ; but He had replied, "If I tell you, ye will not believe : and if I ask you, ye will not answer." Be this as it may, there was now no doubt that He claimed Messiahship, and with that to be the Son of God. We can imagine the excitement that pervaded the Council. In declaring Himself Divine, He had violated the law of Moses ; and in affirming Himself to be the Messiah, He was setting up pretensions to a kingship which infringed upon the rights of Cæsar. With a pretence of horror, and rending his robes to add emphasis to his indignation, Caiaphas turned round to the members of the Council and exclaimed, "What further need have we of witnesses ? Ye have heard the blasphemy : what think ye ?" There was but one answer, loud and decisive : "He is worthy of death !"

The investigators satisfied as to the meaning of Christ's words.

It will be observed that the Council did not condemn Him to death. For more than a

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The verdict
awaits con-
firmation.

generation that power had been taken from the Sanhedrin, and restricted to the procurator. Nor was the verdict reached by these men authoritative. As we have seen, they were at the best but a committee of enquiry, and their finding would have to be ratified in full Council, held according to law between sunrise and sunset, before it could be presented to Pontius Pilate. The morning had scarcely begun; and after the breaking up of the Council some delay had to be made before the Sanhedrin proper could be gathered together.

Christ is
spared none
of the brutality
then bestowed
upon doomed
prisoners.

During this delay Christ was left to the care and consideration of the slaves of Caiaphas's palace. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." These wretched ribalds jeered and scoffed at Him; spat in His face; and coming up behind Him, or throwing cloths over His eyes, some smote Him with rods or with their hands, and then cried, in derisive sport, "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ: who is he that struck thee?" Nothing could better reveal the unruliness of the pontiff's household. Had these outrages been known outside, Jerusalem would have been horrified; not because Jerusalem believed in the Nazarene, but from feelings of compassion, all the more active in the happy Passover days, and rarely at any time absent from the Jewish

heart. Caiaphas, however, cared not what evil chanced to a man who stood so positively in his way. Though in his own house, he made no attempt to protect Him. This rude ordeal was again part of the Passion of our Divine Redeemer. These things turned Him not from His purpose.

While members of the Council still lingered in the hall, Judas approached some of them. He may have watched the trial, and, hearing the condemnation, realized the frightfulness of the work he had done. The money no doubt had been paid as soon as the capture had been accomplished; and he had it with him. The pleasure of handling the coins gave way to disappointment and remorse, so soon as he discovered that Christ would not deliver Himself out of the hands of His enemies—as Judas may have thought He would, and on that supposition endeavoured to justify his treachery. When the Council declared his Master liable to death, Judas knew that all was lost, and that he too was lost. With quivering voice he said to such of the chief priests and elders as would listen to him, “I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood.” Wretched man! they who had no compassion for the guiltless would have no mercy for the guilty. They looked at him with contempt—an apos-

Judas “repenteth himself.”

M

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tate and a traitor. Who could sink to deeper depths of infamy? "What," cried they, "is that to us? See thou to it." He flung down the pieces of money and departed. Would that his better nature had gone far enough to bring him to the feet of the Master he had wronged! The grace of repentance came not to the distracted man. Without hope, the future black with despair, enraged at himself, chagrined at the indifference of the priests and elders who but a few hours before had cajoled and flattered him, and driven by grief at the fate of One who had been to him a familiar Friend, he went out in the early dawn to the plot of ground for which he had pledged the reward of iniquity, and there ended his miserable and lonely life.

Matt. xxvii.
3-5; Acts i.
16-19.

See *Prayer
before the
Passion*, p.
112.

The scrupu-
lousness of the
chief priests.

The chief priests had some scruples. They did not hesitate to misinterpret their own laws, and without justice or mercy condemn a Man who had done no wrong; but they could not take back these pieces of money. They were polluted. "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is the price of blood." The wages of a murderer could not be devoted to sacred purposes. So, after deliberation, the chief priests decided to complete the purchase in the potter's field that Judas had begun, and use it as a burying place

for strangers. And Akeldama, or the Field of Blood, it was for long afterwards called. St. Matthew in relating this story found in it the fulfilment of a prophecy, which, quoting probably from memory, and therefore not precisely, he says was spoken by Jeremiah : "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was priced, whom certain of the children of Israel did price ; and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." This passage is not to be found in Jeremiah ; and it is impossible to discover what other prophet the Evangelist intended to refer to.

In the morning the Sanhedrin met, probably in the same hall as that used by the Committee of Enquiry. No revision of the opinion declared concerning Jesus was made, or, so far as we know, attempted. The law, indeed, directed that no man should be condemned the same day in which his trial began ; but the Sanhedrin followed its leaders, under the plea of expediency, and both set aside formalities which had been devised to prevent hasty judgement, and also assumed that the decision had been reached after fair trial and careful investigation. The business brought before the Council was not the question of Christ's guilt, but how best to present the case

The Sanhedrin confirms the verdict of the High Priest and his assessors.

to the procurator. No hesitation or putting off could be allowed. The people might revolt in defence of One who was rising in popular favour, and the other side might insist on being heard. Every possible hindrance to the will of the Council must be forestalled. Accordingly it was decided to send the Nazarene bound to Pilate as a malefactor, and, without going into particulars, assuming that he would give effect to their judgement, make no definite charge.

The unexpected capriciousness of the Governor.

But the Council reckoned without the procurator. Pilate had no sympathy with things Jewish, and whatever he knew of their religion and customs served only to prejudice him more against the race. As the representative of Roman imperialism he professed toleration to Judaism, as to every other form of religion he might come in contact with: only where Judaism interfered with state policies and political theories did it concern him. And Judaism was apt to do this. The great gatherings at Jerusalem in the Passover season not infrequently gave opportunity for discontent to express itself in riot and insurrection. Pilate had come at this time from Cæsarea, the seat of government, that he might be on hand with authority and reinforcements to suppress any disturbances. He

disliked his task, not because he pitied misguided fanatics and shrank from shedding blood, but because a governor who could not prevent risings among the people he governed lost favour at Rome, and injured his chance of promotion. Somehow or other, while his procuratorship of Judea had probably enriched his purse, it had not increased his reputation. For while Rome grasped power and sought ever to extend the bounds of her empire, she also endeavoured, even in her remotest provinces, to keep peace, encourage prosperity, and maintain law. Unrest indicated abuse, and in Pilate's jurisdiction there was much unrest, and against him rumours of great abuse.

This morning, however, Pilate was not inclined to let matters go by default. It may be assumed that he had sanctioned the arrest, and knew that it had been made. Neither Annas nor Caiaphas appears to have gone with the members of the Council to present their Prisoner to the governor. Probably it would have been thought undignified for them to be present on such an occasion ; and certainly it would have given an importance to the case which it was not desirable that Pilate should suspect. Authorities disagree as to the place

THE TRIAL:
II. Before
Pilate.

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of the Prætorium or the Hall of Judgement, whether in the fortress known as the Tower of Antonia, or in the Palace of Herod, where the governor resided while in Jerusalem. Wherever it was, exact on matters that concerned ritual, though less careful about questions of justice, the chief priests and elders who took Jesus refused to enter a heathen building, lest on this first day of the Passover they should be defiled, and hindered from continuing the festivities. At their demand, therefore, Pilate went out to them and took his seat on the tribunal in the open air, probably before the door of the hall,—a paved area, named in Hebrew Gabbatha, and in Greek *λθόστρωτον*. He was in no humour to waive his right of a personal investigation. He would know for himself, as indeed his duty required, what the night's disturbance had been about. Shrewd and experienced, most likely he suspected that the affair would turn out to be some dispute or quibble over a question that did not in the slightest degree concern him.

Pilate demands the indictment.

Therefore, without showing any graciousness to their assumption, but exposing his impatience and the illegality of their proceedings, at the outset he demanded of the presenters, "What accusation bring ye against

this man?" For the moment they were perplexed. They had no charge. But they hastened to assure him, "If this man were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered him up unto thee." Their anxiety to observe law must have seemed interesting to Pilate. "Take him yourselves," he retorted, "and judge him according to your law." But already they had adjudged the Prisoner deserving of death: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." The matter had to be gone into. The Jews knew their rights. Only the procurator could sentence to death; and, though no accusation had been made, the Man had been tried and condemned, and now in due process of law they asked either for the carrying out of their verdict, or for a fresh enquiry, if Pilate desired it.

Again the procurator may have asked for the charge. The accusers had time to frame one: "We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king."

Treason in three particulars.

Of two of these charges Pilate knew little and cared less. It was of no concern to him what perversion went on in Israel. Religious or social controversies among a subject people were outside his purview. Nor did he heed the accusation about tribute. The men who

Pilate dismisses the first two items.

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made it were not scrupulous themselves either in paying tribute or in recognizing the Emperor. It was always difficult to collect the taxes ; and as one delinquent more was of no moment, so from people who were always ready for rebellion, a profession of loyalty was worthless. Pilate did not know that this second charge was a gross perversion of the truth. Only a few days previously, in the Temple, when Christ had been asked about the tribute, with the intention of charging Him with lack of patriotism if He sanctioned it, and with treason if He advised against it, He had declared that the things which were Cæsar's should be rendered to Cæsar.

Matt. xxii.
15-22.

The Governor proceeds to examine Christ concerning the assumption of kingship.

But when Pilate heard that Jesus claimed to be an anointed king, he directed Him to be taken into the hall for examination. Earlier Jesus had confronted the High Priest ; now He stands before a ruler in the world-empire. They look each other in the face : this Galilean Prophet and this Roman potentate. We can well believe that the serene and wondrous dignity of Christ impressed Pilate. He questioned with himself what manner of man this might be. A glance was sufficient to show that He was no conspirator against Cæsar. Yet His accusers said He claimed to be a king. " Art thou the King of the Jews ? " he asked.

Perhaps to Pilate it seemed an absurd question. Had this Man any strength behind that claim, the priests and leaders who had brought Him there would gladly have been with Him in rebellion. They only wanted opportunity. This gentle, wearied Prisoner, apparently friendless and poor, could not give the chance. He was in their way, and must be gotten rid of. So he asked, as though he would discover the secret of this Jewish envy and disappointment, "Art thou a king?"

It may be that Jesus had not heard the charge made against Him. He asked the governor, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?" Pilate resented the implication that he had any thought in the matter. "Am I a Jew?" he answered almost contemptuously. "Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?" Jesus knew that into Pilate's heart had come both more anxious thoughts and also kindlier feelings than were common. To this man, though a Pagan, and some said of ill repute, He would unfold a part of the mystery. "My kingdom," said He, "is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Christ has no
desire for an
earthly throne.

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Pilate concludes, as others had done, that Jesus was beside Himself;
Mark iii. 21;
John viii. 48, 52; x. 20.

Pilate was startled. These were singular words. What did the Man mean? He exclaimed, "Art thou a king then?" And Jesus answered, "Thou sayest it, because I am a king. To this end was I born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Now Pilate understood. This was another of those visionaries wandering among men to set them right in their speculations concerning things that were insoluble. These simple, half-crazed fellows in their harmless fancies thought philosophers kings, and spoke of the labyrinths of thought as kingdoms. He laughed. "The truth! and what is truth?"

Pilate declares His innocence.

A man like this was not to be put to death. Pilate went out with Him to the waiting members of the Sanhedrin, and said, "I find no fault in this man." Their disappointment vented itself in angry shouts and a torrent of abuse. To Pilate's surprise Jesus made no answer. "Hearest thou not," he cried, "how many things they witness against thee? Answerest thou nothing?" But Jesus still held His peace. Had Pilate feared the Sanhedrin less, he had now released Jesus. The tumult went on. "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, and beginning

from Galilee unto this place." Pilate caught the word "Galilee," and enquired if the Man were a Galilean. Possibly if Herod acquitted the Prisoner, the members of the Sanhedrin would be satisfied.

Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, was in Jerusalem keeping the feast. No friendship existed between him and Pilate. On the occasion of a tumult, probably in the outer courts of the Temple, Pilate had ordered the slaughter of some Galileans, and thereby had mingled their blood with their sacrifices. This may have been but one of several expressions of ill-will on Pilate's part towards Herod; and there is much probability that Herod's dislike for Pilate was not unmanifested. Now, however, came an opportunity for reconciliation, and as Pilate probably had a purpose to serve he made the approach to peace. Herod appreciated, if not the overtures, at least the chance of seeing a Man whose fame had spread throughout his province, and who had caused him some anxiety.

Pilate sends
Jesus to
Herod.

It may be interesting, if not helpful, to recall some particulars of the family, life, and character of Herod Antipas. During the régime of Alexander Jannæus, the son of John Hyrcanus I., nephew of Judas Macca-

The early
connexions of
the House of
Herod with the
Asmonæan
princes.

For the history of the Herods the chief authorities are Josephus and the New Testament ; and their information is used in the Bible Dictionaries, and especially by writers such as Stanley, Schürer, and Edersheim.

bæus, and High Priest of Israel from B.C. 106 to B.C. 79, there came into view one Antipater, concerning whose origin, whether servile and Philistinian, as the Jewish historians contended, or noble and princely, as others have thought, nothing certain can be said. In B.C. 128, John Hyrcanus I. had subjugated the Idumeans or Edomites, and compelled them to embrace Judaism. Over them Alexander Jannæus appointed the comparatively obscure Antipater governor. On the death of Antipater, his son, also named Antipater—sometimes called by the diminutive form of the name, Antipas, to distinguish him from his father—succeeded in the governorship. In B.C. 79, when the brilliant and adventurous Alexander Jannæus died—his reign memorable, among other things, for his crucifixion, in B.C. 85, of eight hundred Pharisees, who had rebelled against him, thus for the first time setting the cross upon the hills of Judea,—his wife Queen Alexandra or Salome, appointed as his successor one of his two sons, Hyrcanus II., a weak and an unwise prince. Trouble followed. His vigorous and bellicose brother, Aristobulus, in B.C. 69, rebelled and seized the crown. For many years the struggle between the adherents of the brothers went on.

Antipater, the new governor of Idumea, sided with Hyrcanus, probably finding it easier to build up the fortunes of his family under an inefficient king, than under a strong and independent ruler. In the autumn of B.C. 63 Jerusalem was taken by the legions of Pompeius, and the Roman general horrified the Jewish people, not only by his massacre of thousands of the followers of Aristobulus, but still more by his intrusion into the Holy of Holies.

"Nothing more forcibly shows the immense superiority of the Jewish worship to any which then existed on the earth than the shock of surprise occasioned by this one glimpse of the exterior world into that unknown and mysterious chamber. 'There was nothing.'" Pompeius restored Hyrcanus to the high priesthood; but peace was far off, and in B.C. 47 Antipater was delegated by Hyrcanus as procurator of Judea. Henceforth the real power was in the hands of the Idumean.

*Stanley, iii.
357.*

Antipater had two sons by Cypros, an Arabian, Phasaël and Herod, the latter born in B.C. 72, and surnamed the "Great." Phasaël was appointed governor in Judea, and Herod in Galilee. Four years later, in B.C. 43, at the instigation of a certain Malichus, who desired an influential position in Judea, Antipater was poisoned by the cupbearer of Hyrcanus as he

*Herod the
"Great" rises
to power.*

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was dining with the High Priest. Herod soon procured the assassination of his father's murderer, and taking his father's office he devised the plans and carried out the policy by which ultimately, in the July of B.C. 37, he received the kingly rank and authority, having, among other atrocities, executed forty-five of the most wealthy and prominent men in Jerusalem who had opposed his schemes, and confiscated their property.

Herod allies himself by marriage with the Maccabean family.

Herod still professed loyalty to Hyrcanus, now an aged and infirm man, and doubtless by his help, and to strengthen his own position, he became betrothed to the beautiful and high-spirited Miriam or Mary, better known by the more lengthened Grecian form of Mariamne, the daughter of Alexander, son of Aristobulus II., and Alexandra, daughter of Hyrcanus II., the two brothers who in their dispute wrought the downfall of the Asmonæan house. Herod thought Alexandra the wisest woman in his court; and for courage and craft, restlessness and ambition, she had few superiors. Mariamne had all the comeliness and majesty of the Maccabæans, and more fortitude and self-control than her mother. After four years of betrothal, in the spring of B.C. 37, the marriage of Herod and Mariamne was celebrated at Sebaste with great ceremony. Herod had one

passion in life to which all else was subject, viz. the pursuit of personal power. Born to be a ruler, strong in physique, skilful in arms, in character wild and passionate, harsh and unbending, observing the forms of religion without a shadow of faith in them, to those who fell into his power hard and un pitying, and to those high in place cringing and servile, he united his powers with cunning and energy to the furtherance of his insatiable ambition. He had many enemies in his way: not only the people of Judea, and the Egyptian Cleopatra, but also Cleopatra's friend and his own mother-in-law, Alexandra, who pursued him with unremitting enmity. Moreover, the Asmonæans looked with contempt upon his family, regarding him as a usurper and an upstart, his sisters as fit for nothing but sempstresses, and his brothers nothing but village schoolmasters.

On the other side, stung by this disdain and irritated by the reproaches of the Asmonæans, as well as anxious to remove out of the way every possible rival, the Idumeans left nothing undone to bring about the destruction of that ancient and princely house. In this effort none was more energetic and determined than Salome, Herod's sister. The evil spirit of her family, sly, vindictive, jealous, unsur-

The hatred of the Idumeans towards the Asmonæans.

passed by any of her kinsfolk for cruelty and heartlessness, she plotted until she saw brought to execution Aristobulus III., the brother of Mariamne, and the aged and infirm Hircanus, her grandfather. In the struggle against Mariamne, for whom Herod had an ardent passion, in B.C. 34, she accused her own husband, Joseph, of unlawful intercourse with the Queen. Joseph, who was also her own and Herod's uncle, was put to death, but Herod's confidence in Mariamne remained. Afterwards Salome married a distinguished Idumean named Costobar, who, though he had once conspired with Cleopatra against Herod, had been received again into favour. By him she had a daughter Bernice, who in time was married to her cousin, Aristobulus, the son of Herod the Great and Mariamne. Salome tired of her husband, accused him as a traitor to her brother, and in B.C. 25 secured his execution. Before this, in B.C. 29, she had so poisoned Herod's mind against Mariamne, that Herod condemned his beautiful and noble wife to death. With dignity and without complaint she died a worthy daughter of the Maccabees. Herod indulged in rhapsodies of remorse, and to her memory built a stately tower in the walls of Jerusalem. The next year her mother, Alexandra, was executed.

Twenty-two years later, his jealousy led him to put to death his and his murdered wife's two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, in whose faces he declared he beheld the features of his beloved Mariamne.

In the course of his life Herod had ten wives, and, after the death of the Asmonæan princess, about B.C. 24 he married another Mariamne, the daughter of Simon, an Alexandrian priest, whom the same year he made High Priest. Of this marriage was born Herod, sometimes called Herod Philip, who must be carefully distinguished from Philip the tetrarch. It was this Herod who married Herodias, the daughter of Aristobulus, son of Mariamne the Asmonæan, and Bernice, the daughter of Costobar and Salome. She named her daughter by this Herod, Salome, after her grandmother, the infamous Salome, sister of Herod the Great. The name was destined to still further shame:—though, to be sure, a Salome shall be one of the women first at the sepulchre.

Herod the husband of Herodias.

Of the other wives of Herod the Great only two are of importance; Malthace, a Samaritan, mother of Herod Antipas and Archelaus; and Cleopatra, of Jerusalem, the mother of Philip the tetrarch. On the death of Herod the Great, in B.C. 4, the kingdom was divided

Other sons of Herod the Great.

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between these three sons : Archelaus receiving Judea, Antipas Galilee and Pera, and Philip Batanæa, Trachonitis, Auranitis, and some parts about Jamnia. Archelaus was banished from Judea A.D. 6, and henceforth the Roman authorities placed procurators over the province.

Herod Antipas
marries
Herodias.

Herod Antipas made peace with Aretas IV., king of Arabia Petræa—that is to say of the Nabatæan territory east and north-east of Palestine, including Damascus, by marrying his daughter. But some time about A.D. 28, Antipas made a visit to his half-brother Herod, son of the second Mariamne, apparently in Rome, where Herod seems to have lived in a private station, he having been excluded from all share in his father's possessions. Antipas became fascinated by Herod's wife, Herodias, who was also niece of both half-brothers, and proposed that she should repudiate her husband and accept him. The offer was dazzling enough for the woman to undertake any infamy. On his return home, his wife, who had discovered his intentions concerning her, fled to her father, and feud once more prevailed between the house of Aretas and the house of Herod. Nevertheless, to the scandal of Israel, Antipas proceeded with his marriage with Herodias.

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At this time Salome, the daughter of Herodias, was about eighteen years of age; and had it not been for the part she took in the execution of John the Baptist she would have been left in a blameless obscurity. The year after Antipas's visit and her mother's disgrace, in A.D. 29, she was married to her uncle Herod Philip, the tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, son of Herod the Great and his fifth wife, Cleopatra, a just and worthy man, according to Josephus, who devoted himself entirely to the duties of his office without sharing in the intrigues of his family. On his death, in A.D. 34, she was married to her cousin Aristobulus, whose highest political preferment seems to have been the government of Lesser Armenia. By him she had three sons. Legend has it, that her death was retributive, being in consequence of a fall on the ice.

Salome.

Edersheim, i.
673.

Antipas had listened gladly to the doctrine of John the Baptist, until such time as the preacher of repentance ventured to make a personal application of that doctrine. But it was impossible for John to pass by in silence a scandal that shocked the whole country. Not only would it have been contrary to his own convictions, but it would also have destroyed whatever impression he

The Dance for
Death.

had made by his preaching. Accordingly he denounced Antipas and Herodias, and at once was seized and cast into prison at Machærus, a strong fortress east of the Dead Sea. Not so long after—Josephus implies immediately after the arrest, but the Gospel narrative allows some time—in the palace at Machærus, Antipas gave a great banquet; the anniversary either of his birth or of his accession to the throne. The story need not be repeated. Like Ahab under the persuasion of Jezebel, and his own father on the representation of his father's sister Salome, so now he at the request of the girl Salome, instigated by her mother Herodias, then and there ordered the execution of John the Baptist. Herodias hated the man who had publicly and unsparingly exposed her perfidy; but policy may have suggested the removal of John before he could stir the people up to rebellion against a prince indifferent to their prejudices at all times, but who in this affair had outraged more decisively than ever their sense of propriety. Not many years after this, Aretas, the father of Antipas's first wife, invaded Antipas's territory and defeated him with great loss, utterly destroying his army, and driving him to appeal to the Emperor for protection. Josephus has no hesitation

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in attributing this disaster to the murder of John the Baptist.

Superstitious and apprehensive, when Herod Antipas heard of the Teacher from Nazareth, he thought it possible that John the Baptist had returned to life. He dreaded the revival of work so dangerous and revolutionary as that of John's short ministry. Report ran that a greater than John had come. Winning over to him the Pharisees, Herod got them to undertake to persuade Christ to leave the country, on the ground that he sought His life. He would rid himself of the new Teacher by craft rather than by violence. Herod would brook no more denunciation. It would be difficult to find a worse type of Oriental despot. Unscrupulous and tyrannical, sensual and capricious, his cruelty was marked by cunning and followed by a remorse void of repentance. Our Lord described him as a "fox," and his underhand diplomacy enabled him to hold office for about thirty-five years; during which time, among other tokens of his loyalty to Rome and of his inheritance of his father's passion for building, he founded the city of Tiberias and named it in honour of the Emperor. His ambition and weakness, however, wrought his undoing; for some ten years later than the date with

The Character
of Herod
Antipas.

Luke xiii. 31,
32.

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which we are dealing, persuaded by Herodias, he requested of Caligula the royal title, and instead thereof received banishment and ended his life in exile.

Herod jests,
but refuses to
condemn.

To this man, proud, crafty, and dissolute, but not because of these qualities, Pilate sent Jesus. Herod was delighted at the chance to see Him. But Jesus disappointed Herod in refusing to work a miracle, and treated him and the accusing members of the Sanhedrin with contemptuous silence. Nothing could be gotten out of Him. Herod asked Him question after question, till he could ask no more. Then in anger and in jest, aided by the guards of his court, he made play of Him, —setting Him at naught and mocking Him. Unhallowed scene, all the more deplorable and cruel, because sanctioned by a Jewish prince! Finally in hilarious derision, and with the intention of showing Pilate how friendly he now felt, and how heartily he participated in the merriment, Herod arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, probably a purple garment out of his own vestiary, and sent Him back to Pilate. Herod had put one prophet to death, whose memory had haunted him ever since, and he would not make that mistake again.

Pilate had no mind for levity. After all he

was a Roman, without prejudice against the Prisoner, desirous of doing Him justice, and indeed assured in his own mind of His innocence. Moreover, it is possible that Pilate had told his wife about the proposed arrest, and she had taken much interest in the Man of Galilee—thus giving an appearance of truth to the tradition that she had a kindly feeling towards Judaism, if she was not a convert thereto. But the appearance vanishes before the decided improbability. However, so ran the story, her mind turned to Him, and by some means or other knowing of His pure and self-denying life, she sent Pilate a message, while he was on the judgement-seat, urgent and anxious we can well believe, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Even were it but worldly wise, this counsel doubtless had its weight. Gladly would Pilate have let the Man go. But he felt powerless. The appeal to the Prince of Galilee had failed. Again he called together the chief priests and elders, with whom had now gathered a large number of people.

Pilate's wife urges the discharge of the Prisoner.

"Ye have brought," he said to them, "this man as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I, having examined him before you,

Pilate continues to maintain the innocence of Christ.

found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him : no, nor yet Herod : for he sent him back unto us : and behold, nothing worthy of death hath been done by him." Possibly he would have added simply, "I will therefore release him" ; but when he saw those angry faces he hesitated, and, willing to admit the possibility that the Prisoner was not entirely without blame, or they without justification in obtaining His arrest, he went on, "I will therefore chastise him, and let him go."

The choice of
the mob
against Pilate's
hope.

A furious outcry of rage greeted this announcement. According to St. Mark, the tumult of protests was interrupted by the coming in of a crowd of people clamouring that the procurator should observe the custom of the feast, and release such a prisoner as popular opinion demanded. It so chanced that at this time the authorities had in prison a notorious ruffian named Bar-abbas, leader of a recent insurrection, in which murder had been committed, possibly by the man himself. Once more Pilate caught at the opportunity. "Ye have a custom," he cried, "that I should release unto you one at the passover : will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" But, urged by the members of the Sanhedrin, the populace as with one

voice shouted, "Not this man, but Bar-abbas!" Pilate could scarcely believe his own ears. "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" But one answer: "Bar-abbas!" Strange answer, and still stranger people: to demand life for a robber! Not unlikely, however, these people knew Bar-abbas and had sympathy with his project, and were utterly indifferent to a stranger from Galilee.

"What then," he asked, "shall I do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?" Again but one answer, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" "But," the governor remonstrated, "what evil hath he done?" Still they cried, loudly and fiercely, "Let him be crucified!"

The demand of ignorance.

It was now no longer only the Sanhedrin who sought His blood, but also a multitude of people. Provoked partly by the envy of the former and the ignorance of the latter, and partly at his own inability to prevent a riot except at the price of gross injustice, he exclaimed, "Take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him." They refused the responsibility: there might be a rescue, should they unaccompanied by soldiers attempt His execution. "We have a law," they retorted, "and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." Greatly disturbed, for in his

Pilate would shift responsibility.

presence this charge seems to have been withheld till this moment, Pilate ordered the Prisoner again into the Prætorium, and once more looking Him in the face he asked, "Whence art thou?" Jesus made no answer. "Speakest thou not unto me?" the governor demanded. "Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?"

Jesus despises
and yet pities
Pilate.

Some have supposed, perhaps rightly so, that Jesus despised a man who wavered so miserably between justice and selfishness, and who was afraid to carry out his own convictions. Pilate's conduct was contemptible. His claim to have authority and power to do what he was willing enough to do, but not brave enough, made it even more inexcusable. And yet Jesus pitied him. In His reply He points out that Pilate misunderstood his power over Him. "Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." The meaning seems to be this: God has so ordered it, that it has fallen to this Roman procurator to sit in judgement upon His Son. Pilate did not seek or receive this power of himself. It was deputed to him. He is under constraints of which he knows nothing. His sin consists

John xix. 11.

in desecrating his heaven-given authority to the furtherance of malice and injustice,—in allowing himself to sacrifice innocence to political expediency. He does not know Who it is that he is wronging. His is the greater sin who does know, or should know, but who in his deliberate wrath, purposing and foreseeing what would befall Him, repudiated the Son of God and delivered him up to Pilate. The governor had power indeed, not inherent, but appointed him of God; and Caiaphas recognized this power, and would divert it against Him who is from above, and by whom all power is given. The High Priest would use for his own evil purposes the ignorance and the authority of Pilate. Therefore to him belonged the greater sin.

More earnestly than before Pilate sought to release Him. "He was determined," St. Peter says, "to let him go." He appealed again to the priests and people; but in vain. The members of the Sanhedrin declared, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." The implied threat of impeachment for disloyalty to the Emperor put the finishing stroke to Pilate's hesitation. He could not afford an enquiry into his management of Judea. There were too many

Acts iii. 13.

Pilate threatened with charge of disloyalty.

rumours of wrong-doing abroad : probably most of them without foundation, but the people who were now urging him to an act of injustice would be as unfair to him in his adversity, and investigation would tend to ruin. So he took his seat on the tribunal before the people, as he had done earlier, and proceeded to sentence Jesus.

Pilate's repudiation of responsibility.

Deut. xxi. 6-9.

According to St. Matthew, however, before doing so, Pilate endeavoured by a symbolical act to clear himself of all complicity in this woeful affair. That there should be no misunderstanding, he observed a ceremony which if not peculiarly Jewish had been prescribed by the Jewish law. He took water, and washing his hands before the multitude said, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man : see ye to it." And for themselves, their countrymen, and for generations unborn, these leaders of Israel assumed a guilt, the punishment of which has been supposed to have been associated with the bitter experience and cruel persecutions through which the Jew has passed in the ages since : "His blood be on us, and on our children." Whether this tradition was preserved from a desire to account for the evils which befell Israel at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem must remain uncertain ; but the con-

nexion between Israel's treatment of Christ and Israel's calamities is still commonly taken for granted, as in the early Christian ages it was vigorously asserted. Origen declares that the Jews were guilty of many sins, but they had been punished for none so severely as for those which were committed against Jesus. They did, he says, a crime of the most unhallowed kind, in conspiring against the Saviour of the human race; hence they have suffered on His account unparalleled afflictions.

Origen,
*Against
Celsus* :
lib. ii. cap.
viii. ; lib. iv.
cap. xxii.

"And we say," he predicts, "with confidence that they will never be restored to their former condition." Sixteen hundred years have gone by since Origen ventured that prophecy. Nevertheless, there is no justification possible for the vengeance which nations calling themselves Christian have meted out to the children of Israel, or reason to suppose that these persecutions, or even Origen's deductions, were in accord with the will of Him who gave His life to save and not to destroy. Better the charity of St. Peter : "And now, brethren, I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."

Acts iii. 17.

The Prisoner probably had upon Him the same purple robe in which Herod had arrayed Him, His hands bound, His appearance that of one worn, wearied, and dejected,—a pitiful

"Ecce
Homo!"

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Figure. With an appeal to their more humane feelings, Pilate exclaimed to the people, "Behold the man!" It was useless. His accusers had no mercy. "Crucify him!" was their reply. "Behold your King!" cried Pilate, perhaps now in angry irony. With one voice came the same fierce response, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" In his disgust at men who had so entrapped him, the governor said, "Shall I crucify your King?" The sarcasm burned into their souls. They forgot themselves and all that they and their fathers had stood and suffered for, and in an ebullition of loyalty to the power they execrated, they surprised Pilate by declaring, "We have no king but Cæsar!"

Then Pilate gave sentence as they willed, and delivered Him unto the soldiers to be crucified. "And the soldiers led him away within the court, which is the Prætorium."

The
Scourging.

According to Roman custom, now followed the scourging, though it is possible that it came immediately after Pilate's offer to make that punishment a compromise. This brutal infliction, administered by men degraded in feeling by their occupation, was designed to add to the sufferings of the victim; and yet possibly, and, if so, mercifully, it served to weaken him for a quicker and easier death.

The whole cohort or band, which in Jerusalem consisted of from five hundred to a thousand men, was not necessarily interested or engaged in carrying out a sentence pronounced against a solitary Prisoner, but many of the soldiers gathered round Him, and, perhaps while waiting for the means of execution to be prepared, made sport of Him, according to their wont. They bedecked Him with the purple robe, no doubt the same that Herod had furnished, and with brambles brought in from neighbouring hedges or woodshed, perhaps to furnish fuel for the fire, they plaited a circlet of thorns and set it upon His brow. A reed was thrust in His right hand. Then they gave Him sham homage, bending their knees as though to a prince, and crying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Tired of that, or not getting as much amusement out of it as they expected, they spat on Him, and smote Him with the reed. And at last, everything now being ready, they threw aside the purple robe, put His own garments on Him, and led Him away.

The Third
Mocking.

Such appears to have been the order of proceedings in the Trial of our Divine Redeemer; but so hard is it to piece together and

The difficulties in attempting a reconciliation of the several accounts are insurmountable.

interpret the varying particulars given by the several Evangelists, that it must not be considered certain. We have assumed that in the four Gospels there are few variants of the same incident, and this is assuming more than would generally be allowed. On this theory, for instance, there were three "mockings": one in the court of the High Priest, a second before Herod, and a third in the Prætorium; but it is not improbable that the three accounts refer to one and the same incident. Nor is it altogether clear what passed at the meeting between Christ and Annas, or, indeed, at the trial before Caiaphas. Substantially the facts as a whole were as we have them, but some of the details or settings may be otherwise. Traditions relating to the Passion and Death of Christ, upon which so much in the new Revelation depended, would very early begin to gather; and probably, as these events are narrated at greater length than any other events in the life of our Lord,—thereby showing the widespread interest in them and the recognition of their importance,—so the narrations they come from, if not they themselves, form the oldest parts of the sacred story. These are matters upon which much diversity of opinion may be indulged in without affecting the truth of the Gospels; and only by giving

cause for disputes which decide nothing can reasons now be advanced for the arrangement here adopted. Possibly the best justification for this arrangement is that it seems to avoid greater difficulties, and is fairly derived from the several accounts. No theory can satisfy every reader, and no theory can be accorded unquestionable certainty.

In these long hours which had passed since the Passover Feast in the Upper Room so much had happened and had been endured, that our Blessed Lord must have been reduced to severe bodily weakness. In the Garden He had passed through a fear so intense that one of the Evangelists says, "His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." Thence He was taken; successively to the palaces of Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, and in each place subjected to indignities, examinations, accusations, and fatigue. The din around Him was incessant. Hours had been spent in this excitement. Neither food nor water had been given Him, or any kindly consideration shown Him. Then came the scourging, with the pain and loss of blood. Hardly could such suffering and privation have been borne by a man of strongest, sturdiest build, and that

The Physical Weakness of Christ.

Luke xxii. 44 ; though omitted in some MSS., the evidence is decidedly in its favour.

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Jesus was not such is intimated in the Gospels,—for instance, at the time when, wearied with His journey, He was left by the disciples at Jacob's Well, while they went on to Sychar to buy food. By the time that the soldiers were ready to take Him to Calvary, He must have been on the verge of exhaustion.

The Mental
Suffering.

And yet the Church, while not overlooking this physical aspect of the Passion, has been led, perhaps by spiritual intuition, to lay more stress upon the mental suffering. Up to this point, the weight of this phase of the Agony may be imagined. That the disciples should have made good their own safety by flight seems to have been in accordance with the request of Jesus, that they should be allowed to go their way. Matthew and Mark, however, imply that this flight had something mean about it: “they all *forsook him* and fled.” They could do nothing to save Him. Indeed, He had deprecated resistance. But in taking care of themselves, for the moment they may also have lost faith in Him, seeing He had done nothing to save Himself, and in disappointment, possibly in desperation, as well as in fear, they abandoned Him to His fate. At all events, they who recorded the story could not forget that these disciples, whom He had chosen to be His apostles, all left Him in the season o

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His direst distress. In the years to come their conduct would be held up as a warning to other disciples and ministers of Jesus Christ, in dark and stormy days not to give up their work for their Lord, with which, if it is work approved of and blessed by Him, He identifies Himself. True, the Eleven returned quickly to their allegiance; and knowing that they would do so, His faith in them being greater than their faith in Him, He may have rejoiced over their safety, as well as have sorrowed at their desertion. As to Peter,—the tears of repentance falling upon the weakening faith and languishing love, and bringing them back to vigour, took away the pain his cowardice had caused.

The desertion
of the Dis-
ciples.

These men would all come to Him and to themselves again, and do valiant service—most of them lay down their lives—for His sake. But the Son of Perdition was gone, and by this time his body lay broken in the Potter's Field. In that other life into which unbidden Judas had gone, could the Sacrifice about to be consummated at Calvary avail for him? Would mercy find that wretched soul, lost in the night and wilderness beyond death, and help him back to the Master who once had called him and trusted him? These questions remain among the mysteries of God, though it

All but Judas
repented and
returned.

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may be we shall know hereafter ; but the world that Jesus came to save had in it, and still has in it, others such as he, and the burden of both him and them lay upon the heart of the Son of Man.

The people
who demanded
the Crucifixion
not the same
as they who
cried Hosanna.

It has been often asked, whether the people who demanded so vehemently the crucifixion of the Nazarene were with the multitude who, a few days earlier, sang hosannas to Him, and cast their garments and strewed palm-boughs in His way ? The supposition has served for ages to illustrate the fickleness of popular emotion. But the supposition is so doubtful that one wonders it was ever entertained. The people who hailed Christ as the King coming in the name of the Lord are called a "multitude of the disciples," by which we understand those who having seen His mighty works were in sympathy with Him. On that day Christ came from Bethany, where He was known both as the Friend of Mary and Martha, and also as having restored Lazarus to life ; and most of these people came from that town or joined the company on the way. On the other hand, the people who shouted for Bar-abbas had no knowledge of Jesus. They were of a class that saw no wrong in the robber-chief. Bar-abbas was one of them ; they knew him, and they were sympathizers with crime and

outrage. They were now availing themselves of a custom which law-abiding citizens probably deplored. The members of the Sanhedrin had no difficulty in persuading them to reject the procurator's alternative. If they chose the Nazarene, then their friend and comrade would die. Besides all else, he was a Jew, probably a Jerusalemite. They had no interest in a Galilean. "Away with Him! Give us Bar-abbas!"

These two multitudes could scarcely have been the same. Nevertheless multitudes are changeable, and can be more easily swayed by emotion than by reason. A chance cry, and the attention and purpose of a crowd are diverted. Lives have been saved and lives have been lost by the adroit, and even accidental, use of such means. And though the people who sang hymns of praise the Sunday afternoon that our Blessed Lord rode from Bethany into Jerusalem may not have been the people who that chilly Friday morning cried out against Him, they represented that complex, impulsive humanity, which when gathered into masses no man dare trust. During this same Passover season in which Christ suffered, there were crowds of people who heard Him and professed faith in Him; but the Evangelist significantly tells us, "Jesus

The weakness
of crowds.

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John ii. 24, 25. did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men, and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man ; for he himself knew what was in man."

The rejection
of righteousness.

We may well believe that it was not so much the uncertainty of the multitude that caused sorrow to Christ, as the demand of the people that he should be sacrificed for a reason they knew not of, and that a man of sin should be preferred whose evil life was notorious. It was the rejection of righteousness. Christ had given His all for the well-being of Israel. In Galilee and in Judea He had told the people of the things of God, speaking as no other man had ever spoken, and supporting His words by signs and wonders as great as any the Messiah had been expected to give. To many a home He had brought happiness, and into innumerable lives peace and hope. And now, in wanton and selfish ignorance, He was thrust aside, and His life esteemed as less worth saving than a murderer's. This expression of sin, even were it reduced to mere thoughtlessness, showed something of the depths from which humanity had to be raised. Was it worth the price that should be paid? But because He knew what was in man, He saw something worth saving in these miserable, bedraggled creatures from the slums

of Jerusalem, pleading for the life of Barabbas. There are hosts in every city of the world like unto them, and their burden, too, lies heavily on the heart of the Son of Man.

But, if we may dare look into a sorrow such as His sorrow, it is possible we shall find that the fault of the disciples, the cowardice of Peter, the treachery and suicide of Judas, and the ignorance of the multitude were less grievous to Him than the malice and hatred of Annas, Caiaphas, and other members of the Sanhedrin. These were the priests and teachers of Israel, men who had considered what they were doing, and knew that their persecution came not from a desire to protect Israel so much as from a determination to defend their own interests. Probably they had identified their interests with the prosperity of Israel, and had discovered reasons for thinking that by the exchange of money and the sale of beasts and pigeons in the courts of the Temple, they were benefiting the worshippers from long distances, who thus could conveniently procure the means of paying their tribute and making their sacrifices. The bickerings and strife incident to such trade were as nothing to the accommodation provided. Doubtless even Annas had persuaded himself that he was a promoter of

The malice of the leaders of Israel more pitiful than all else.

the good of Israel. So when the Pharisees, superior to these worldly considerations, sought to save the traditions and practices of Israel from the innovations and interpretations now advocated, he and his Sadducean friends joined with them in the determination to put the Nazarene to death. He who came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil the law, not to bewilder the people in the mazes of rabbinical subtilties and legends, but to restore to them the simpler and purer faith of a David and an Isaiah, and to give to that faith a life and a meaning which should be salvation to all who received it, was to be suppressed.

Unbelief the
secret of
bigotry.

In their fear of Christ, these men made plain their want of faith in their own professions. Persecution nearly always comes from unbelief. A religion that asks for itself coercive jurisdiction and punitive authority, that seeks to remove its opponents by exile or death, has lost its power of moral suasion and of making its need felt. As a spiritual force it is dead. Had the leaders of Israel, apart from Annas's business interests, been sure of their position, as true, divine, and lasting, they would not have been afraid of a Galilean Prophet. And the same fact applies to men who in later times, and in the Name of that Prophet, have kindled the fires of martyr-

dom and sharpened the sword of persecution. But for doubt in themselves, and for the dread that the principle they would defend is not strong enough in itself to hold its own, they would stay their hand. Christianity has nothing to gain, but much to lose, in employing physical means, such as the Sanhedrin were now using, for either defence or propagation.

Pilate indeed was not clear of blame, in that he allowed the clamourings of prejudice to prevail against his convictions; but, as we have already observed, Pilate was a foreigner, a man of the world, and anxious to tide Jerusalem over another Passover season without disturbance. Compared with any of the consuls or proconsuls whom Cicero impeached of a thousand crimes before the Roman Senate, his record was well nigh stainless. The early Church dealt gently with him, as we have seen; nor did Christ seem to regard him with any approach to that severity which for many centuries has been popular. Perhaps his punishment came in the loss he had incurred of self-respect: in the consciousness that he had dallied with injustice, and from fear had condemned innocence to suffering, and never again could look upon himself as a true, upright, and impartial administrator. But

Comparison of
the guilt of
Pilate and of
the men of
Israel.

See *Expositor*,
second series,
vol. viii. p. 121.

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whatever his fault, it was small beside that of the chief priests and other leaders of Israel who did know, and yet kept back mercy from assuaging the fierce tide of bigotry and selfishness. That the men who sat in Moses' seat should refuse and denounce Him of whom Moses and the prophets did speak, made still more bitter the cup of sorrow placed in Christ's hand. The priesthood had degraded itself. The moral tone of the chief men of Israel had fallen. Craft and subtility had prevailed, the fact being illustrated even in the day when Israel was commemorating its deliverance from the Egyptian house of bondage ; and whatever hope the Prophet of Galilee had in the integrity of the leaders in Jerusalem was shattered. And underneath it all lay that covetousness which knows no restraints of law or conscience. Nor did the evil die when it had done its will upon Jesus. It lived on, even in the unlikely atmosphere of a religion greater than Judaism, and again and again crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.

The will of Christ not overcome by physical or mental distress.

What wonder, then, that with mind worn with thoughts such as these, and with body weakened by pain and privation, as the guards led Him out on His way to Calvary, our Lord was already within the shadow of death !

Yet, even now that the moments of the last hour are coming on, we cannot but believe that by a word He could have saved Himself. He did not utter that word. Reduced to conditions of bodily and spiritual distress which tried His humanity to the uttermost, He still held fast to His purpose. His will was to die unto the temptation with which Satan now assailed Him. For this the Father had sent Him into the world. The Sacrifice goes on. The question of the worth or the result of dying for men who had done and were yet doing such wrong to Him, was met and answered. The moment for which Satan had planned and plotted never came: no thought of giving up ever entered or even overshadowed the mind of the Redeemer. We dwell more upon His trial before Caiaphas and Pilate, and are likely to forget that the man Christ Jesus was on trial before a tribunal more august and decisive than that of Jewish pontiff or Roman prince. The ages watch for the outcome of the struggle between sin and righteousness; and at this time Heaven awaited the victory of Jesus over the weakness of human nature, and beheld with joy His continued death unto sin.

The haste to carry out Pilate's sentence was

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The Procession
starts for
Calvary.

not only unseemly, but also contrary to the Jewish custom which directed that execution should take place in the evening, and forbade that two persons should be put to death on the same day. Two bandits had been also condemned, and Pilate sent them with Christ to their doom. It was now past eight o'clock, and while priests and elders and other religious folk of Jerusalem were hasting to the Temple to the morning sacrifice at nine o'clock, the centurion mustered his guard of four men to each prisoner, and a cross for each prisoner having been selected from the pile which it is said lay always ready to hand in the Prætorium, the procession set out. Each prisoner carried his own cross, and before him walked an official bearing a board on which was told the offence for which death had been incurred. For Jesus, Pilate had directed an inscription in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek: "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." The priests remonstrated with Pilate, and urged that the charge should read, "He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" But the procurator, frustrated in his efforts to rescue Jesus, and possibly as angry at himself as at them for the miscarriage of justice, scornfully refused to make the change. It may be remembered that when Aristobulus I., son of John Hyrcanus and great

nephew of Judas Maccabæus, assumed the regal title, B.C. 107, a king once more reigning in Israel, he styled himself the "King of the Jews."

Ordinarily, and probably on this occasion, criminals for execution were led through the most frequented thoroughfares, so that the people seeing the fate of wrong-doers might take warning. With whip and goad the soldiers forced the prisoners on as they stumbled over the roughly paved streets or staggered under the weight of their cross : scant consideration being shown to wretches whom the world thought no longer fit to live. The rabble gathered after them : a motley crowd, curious, thoughtless, and brutal. Shouts and laughter filled the air. Greater grew the multitude that followed, and more coarse and ghastly the spectacle. Thus, through the City of David, He who came to be called Great David's Greater Son, rather than as a Prince and a Saviour triumphant and glorious, was led as a common felon.

At the gate of the city, as they were going out into the country, Jesus fell. His strength failed Him. He could carry His cross no farther. A climax had been reached. The soldiers ceased their blows and maledictions ; the gaping crowd looked on in surprise and

The way
through the
City.

Christ breaks
down by the
way.

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Woman's
work of mercy.

Proverbs xxxi.
6.

silence. Among the spectators were some women, perhaps members of a guild of women in Jerusalem who are said to have banded themselves together, among other purposes, to prepare and administer the potion of medicated wine which was intended to stupefy and lessen the pain of dying criminals. An old proverb said : "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul." These good women may have been on their way to Golgotha, to perform their mission of mercy. When they saw His desperate condition, not necessarily from faith in Him, but more likely out of pure compassion for one evidently suffering so severely, they began to wail and lament. Not only was this intended as an expression of sympathy or pity, which might comfort and strengthen the afflicted one, but tears and lamentations were supposed to help in atoning for his sin, and to lessen his dishonour. A person on the way to death was not considered deserving of such, nor should he be encouraged by the hope that his crime could be forgiven ; and the law forbade any manifestations of condolence. But cruel as human nature can be, there are depths within it of tenderness which a scene such as that which these women beheld rarely fails to reach. So, notwithstand-

ing the law to the contrary, they wept for the wearied, blood-stained, and helpless Man.

Sympathy is sweet, and mercy such as this goes not unrewarded. Perhaps had these women known for whom they wept and sang their dirge, and the purpose for which He was passing through this tribulation, they would have felt that the pity came too late: that, indeed, it was altogether out of place for One who desired it not. Jesus asks no pity for Himself: not only under these circumstances because of its uselessness and irony, but also because of the temptation which Satan would devise out of these evidences of human feeling to persuade Him to heal sorrow by giving up His purpose. There are conditions in which pity weakens rather than helps; and men about to do a brave and heroic act care not to see tears or to listen to regrets. In this case the pity should be for those who have brought Him to this suffering, and for that world which would reject the salvation His sufferings were designed to bring about. If tears were to be shed, they should not be for the pains which were torturing His frail body, but for the conditions which made it possible for such pains to be inflicted. Misery itself, terrible as it may be, is slight in comparison with that which causes the misery. And even

Christ asks not
that any
should pity
Him.

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misery may not require commiseration. By Christ's death a great purpose was to be accomplished ; pity should be shown to those in whose tribulations appears no benefit. At this time it is not Christ for whom they weep, but they who weep that are in evil case. Therefore, though He rejects not their offering, so kindly meant, He says to them, " Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."

Luke xxiii. 28.

Were the words which follow uttered by Christ at this time?

It is doubtful if in His exhausted condition and amidst the confusion Christ said more than this, the words which follow probably being added as explanatory of His admonition to the women by St. Luke, from utterances of our Lord on the subject of the fall of Jerusalem made early this week. " For behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us ; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? "

There may be no reference whatever to the destruction of Jerusalem in our Lord's admonition.

Though there is nothing but conjecture to support the opinion, no one hesitates to apply these words to the desolation of Jerusalem at the hands of Titus in A.D. 70. But, admitting this application, if the words were added as we

imagine they may have been, the question arises as to the possible connexion the fall of Jerusalem had with the admonition to the women. The sorrow which awaited these women and their children, and for which Christ bade them weep, may have been that which should come to Israel as the result of the repudiation of Christ—the continuance in the intellectual and spiritual bondage of the law ; the tyranny exercised over the individual by the priesthood and the schools ; the triumph of unrighteousness ; and the passing away of the great hope. There does not appear to have been any suggestion at this moment to lead to a prophecy of the ruin of Jerusalem. Christ had been charged with speaking evil against the Temple ; but no one had accused Him with foretelling the overthrow of the city. That He foresaw and described to His disciples that scene of horror and death is not to be disputed because the tradition of His doing so was not related in its present form till near or after the event. When it had happened, both Jew and Christian were staggered and astounded. It seemed like the end of the world, as it was indeed the end of an age. Naturally the writers of the Gospels, though they contemplated the catastrophe from afar, would make the most of the reports

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and records which had come to them of the Master's prophecy. St. Luke could think of no greater sorrow possible than the day brought forth when the feet and lances of the invading hosts were wet with the blood of the dead and wounded lying in the streets of the city. The world has known few such awful massacres. So he sets Christ's utterance made at another time and under other circumstances in this place.

How service
for Christ came
unexpectedly
to a stranger.

Recorded by
all the Syn-
optics.

The prostration of our Blessed Lord made it necessary that some one should be found to carry His cross. Throughout the Roman Empire soldiers had the right to impress both men and beasts into the public service. Presently these guards saw a stranger, an Israelite from Cyrene, coming in from the country, evidently to keep holiday in the city. Little did this wayfarer suppose as he set out that morning, that he should be called upon to bear on his shoulders the cross of the world's Redeemer. One cannot help venturing the hope that grace came to Simon : that he who carried the Cross was also saved by the Cross. His name was remembered, and tradition has it that both he and his sons, Rufus and Alexander, attained prominence in the Church. Be this as it may, the Cyrenian became the type of those cross-bearers who, in the ages to

follow, in the name and for the sake of their Lord, should take up the burdens and sorrows of earth's afflicted ones—crosses too heavy for these to carry, though they may have to die on them. Indeed, this way to Calvary in which our dear Master was led to His Sacrifice, after all, is the true figure of the way by which many of His disciples must journey; and others shall do service for Him in comforting and sustaining them.

Once more the procession moves on. But so extreme was Christ's physical depression that the guards had to carry Him, or at least support Him, the rest of the way—for such would seem to be the meaning of St. Mark's *φέρουσιν αὐτόν*. A melancholy scene! In no figurative sense did He undergo humanity's weakness: He passed into the depths, and in His own self suffered the pain of exhaustion. No less real and keen was the ignominy, the disgrace, the humiliation, visited upon Him. Numbered with the transgressors, no attempt was made, more than for them, to alleviate His miseries. It is said that desperation and torture drew from prisoners on their way to death, and at the time of death, shrieks and exclamations, cries for pity, and curses upon executioners and guards, till the crowd standing near, horror-stricken, ceased to jeer or

The terror of the journey.

Mark xv. 22.

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scoff. Possibly this morning the wind carried the piercing shrieks across the countryside, into the gardens and vineyards of the houses and cottages scattered along the road to Calvary. Women and children shuddered as they listened, and held their breath as they gazed : shocked, however, not at the barbarity, as they would have been in ages when life was thought sacred, even in the slave and the outcast, but at the wickedness of the criminal. Such manifestations of impotent wrath and frightful pain were supposed to have a salutary effect upon the populace. What monsters of iniquity were they who incurred such punishment ! With these monsters, these illustrations of depravity, was He set who had done no wrong.

The patience
of the Son of
God.

Yet He opened not His mouth. No cry came from Him. Did they who now carried or helped Him along observe this ? Perhaps they thought Him too weak or faint to speak. They knew not that in this fierce and agonizing trial—when the very torture drives the soul to bitter hatred and fiendish execration, and Satan avails himself of the chance to force poor victims to despair—they beheld One to whom the temptation should be powerless, and whose determination to die unto sin should not be broken. Even now, He does not shrink

from the obligation which He has undertaken. This cruelty, all the more horrible because without the pretence of either necessity or justice, does not terrify Him. He looks death in the face, and is not afraid. Sin causes its pains, but He will bear its pains without sin. So, remembering how He passed through the tribulation, and knowing the dangers which then beset man, we implore God not to suffer us at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Him.

Crucifixion, if not invented by the Phoenicians, seems to have been a favourite mode of execution among them ; and probably, though not necessarily, from them it passed into Egypt, Persia, India, Greece, and Carthagina, and thence to Rome. The Cross first appeared on the hills of Palestine in B.C. 85, when Alexander Jannæus, the High Priest, crucified eight hundred Pharisees who had made a revolt against him. Among the Romans at first it was reserved for criminals of the worst kind and for slaves. Later, no distinction was made between these and subject-peoples or citizens. All the horrors that the Carthaginians, a tribe for cruelty the most conspicuous among the ancients, had invented, the Romans, also a hard-hearted people, adopted

Crucifixion, its invention and method.

p. 188 *ante*.

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and thereby endeavoured to make their justice felt and their name feared. In Judea, as in other provinces of the empire, this barbarous and dreadful punishment superseded the native usages, and being more brutal than almost any other ferocity contrived by man, it made the people still more coarse and bloodthirsty. Every particular connected with it was designed to prolong and increase the agony. On arriving at the place of execution, the upright stake of the cross was firmly fastened in the ground. The condemned man, or *cruciarius* as he was called, was stripped of his clothing, laid upon his back on the ground, and the transverse beam was thrust under his shoulders. Then his arms were stretched out, right and left, and either by cords or by long nails were fastened to the beam ; and the beam, with the body attached, was lifted up to its position on the upright post, and there made secure. A projection of wood supported the feet, which were nailed to the cross either separately or the one over the other. The victim was then left to linger through death ; and death might come from the loss of blood, or from fever, or, as more frequently happened, from hunger. Sometimes this did not chance for days. In the meanwhile the slowly dying *cruciarius*, stripped of his clothing, was exposed

to the heat of the sun by day, and to the chills and dews of the night; and the rabble which gathered around him was free to abuse him in any way it chose. No protection was afforded him from missiles. Even when death came, the body was left till it decayed, or was eaten by birds, or was taken away by the dead man's friends.

The conjecture approaches nearest to certainty which maintains that Golgotha was an eminence near one of the roads leading from the city north to Damascus. It may have been so called, either because of its shape, dome-like as a skull, or because, being the place of execution, the Tyburn of Jerusalem, skulls lay whole or in fragments thereabout. Bishop Jeremy Taylor, adopting the latter meaning, speaks of it as "a hill of death and dead bones, polluted and impure." The ghastliness of the place is lessened by the Vulgate rendering of the word, and in Calvaria or Calvary is preserved the thought of the Sacrifice without its attendant horrors. So the word "Cross" has lost its original associations, and stands out with sacred and winsome dignity. Even crucifixion ceased, not because men were less brutal, for many another torture was perpetuated, but because Christ had been thus put to

The site of
Golgotha.

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death, and no man was worthy of a fate such as His.

Christ never
falters.

That the fact may not pass out of our mind, let us put up with reiteration : not even in the prospect of a most fearful death had temptation any influence for evil upon our Divine Redeemer. He clung fast to the purpose of doing His Father's will, and of proving that there is no condition possible in which man may not retain his honour and come off conqueror. It is not the pain that makes His Sacrifice, but His resistance to the power of pain to involve Him in sin, and thereby hinder Him, the Captain of our salvation, from being made perfect through sufferings.

Heb. ii. 10.

The soldiers and their prisoners reached Calvary by the time of the offering of the morning sacrifice ; and while Israel rejoiced and the smoke of incense and the melody of psalms filled the Temple, the Lord and Saviour of men was lifted up to His death. The crowd gathered round the executioners as they prepared for their gruesome duty, morbidly curious to see all that should be done ; and they, ignorant men, accustomed to scenes such as these, and regarding Christ only as a Jewish malefactor who had been ordered to His doom, did their work without

a qualm. Before they began, however, there came the bearers of the "mercy-potion," perhaps some of the women who prepared such, with compassionate care, to stupefy the mind and dull the senses of those appointed unto death. A tender mission this, glimmerings of an oasis of love in a desert of cruelty and death, relieving somewhat the hardness of the times. The cup of wine mingled with myrrh or gall was placed to His lips. Parched with thirst, fain would He have drunk thereof. But as He tasted, He discerned its purpose, and, though doubtless grateful for the kindness, He refused. Not with senses thus beclouded and deadened may He meet death. The pains were terrible, and would become worse; nor did He desire pain for pain's sake: but the fear of pain may not tempt Him, by an escape therefrom, to unfit Himself for the work which yet lay before Him.

A tiny ray of human sympathy.

That it was a clear and genial morning may be inferred from the numbers of people who went out to see the executions. Though not as beautiful as the regions farther to the north, beyond the borderland of Judea and Samaria, the country close by in the spring-time had its charms. The fields and gardens were fresh and green, and the eye lighted on

The irony of sunshine and suffering.

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groves where singing birds had their nests, and hillsides whence came the voices of children and the sound of falling waters. On the other hand lay the city, with its strangely mingled life, its sumptuous buildings and narrow lanes, its fears and worries, its passions, hopes, and joys. As one turned, one beheld nature at rest and humanity in turmoil. To such things, however, the men who made ready the Cross and the Victim gave no heed. Neither cared they for the excruciating agony He suffered as the nails were beaten through His hands,—the hands that had caressed little children and cheered tired and saddened folk. Yet already they must have begun to wonder what manner of Man He was. At the shrieks and moans of His companions in misery they may have laughed ; at His silence and submission, they could not but hold their peace.

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS.

It was during this preparation, when cruelty was nearing its height, that, looking upon the men so grievously afflicting Him, our dear Lord, instead of giving way to the temptation to remonstrate or reproach, uttered the first of what are known as the Seven Last Words. By a happy coincidence, as it has been con-

sidered, these utterances agree in number with many other things which are more or less sacred in religious teaching. Indeed, "seven" itself early acquired a symbolical and hallowed character. The stars of Arcturus, and the Pleiades, the planets, and the seven days in the week, a reflection of one of the four phases of the moon, had been familiar to primitive man. The Old Testament abounds in uses of this number, while the last book of the New Testament is arranged upon it, *e.g.* seven stars, seven golden candlesticks, seven churches, seven angels, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials or bowls. Reference is made to the Seven Spirits of God, and ruin is declared against the seven kings represented by the seven mountains. There are seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, and seven penitential psalms; and in time, as ingenuity discovered that the number of the sacraments and the number of orders in the ministry were likewise seven, so imagination depicted the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin, and pointed out the Seven Champions of Christendom. Thus also with the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, and the Seven Deadly Sins, and their seven contrary Virtues. It will also be found that these Seven Sayings

Of the number
"Seven."

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from the Cross present so many phases or revelations of Christ's character ; and as in the Lord's Prayer three petitions are for the glory of God, and four for the welfare of man, so here, the first three Words concern others, and the next four concern Himself.

The First of
the Seven Last
Words.

Luke xxiii. 34.

In utter forgetfulness of Himself,—neither threatening His murderers or begging pity of them, nor yet praying that the cup may pass from Him or that the legions of angels may rescue Him, He cries, “Father ! forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Again He assumes His priestly office, and, instead of condemning, as the temptation suggested, He intercedes for those who have brought Him into this misery. They are the objects of His solicitude. He is dying for them ; He is also dying because of their sin. His prayer is not only for these rough and thoughtless soldiers, but also for the chief priests and leaders of Israel, ignorant notwithstanding their pretensions, the self-loving and cowardly procurator, the rabble mocking and laughing, and the centurion, perhaps already doubtful. Cruel as they have been to Him, He now illustrates His own principle: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully

use you and persecute you." And again: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." They did not know, neither did they consider, the wrong they had done and were doing—not only to this Man, but also and much more to themselves, and to all that they held dear. Vengeance was their due. Once in the Temple, He asked what the lord of the vineyard would do to the husbandmen who had killed his son; and some of the priests and elders replied, according to their conception of the fitness of things, "He will miserably destroy those miserable men." But, in His hour of anguish, Christ pleads that from His persecutors wrath may be averted, and that they may be forgiven.

Matthew xxi.
41.

These men, however, were not exceptional. Too much has been said, and unjustly said, against the Jew for having brought Christ to death, though, as we have contended, it was only a handful of priests and politicians who had any part in the matter, for the multitude who shouted for Bar-abbas knew little about Jesus. But had the whole Jewish people been guilty, under like circumstances any other people would have done the same. It is doubtful if many individuals to-day, even though they call themselves Christian, would accept Christ

The sin
manifested
towards Christ
not peculiar
to the Jew.

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as the Son of God were they to see Him only as He appeared in Jerusalem at that time. So the same might have happened in any other age ; and soldiers other than Roman would have obeyed orders without hesitation or compunction. The people that stood before the Cross of Jesus were representative of a humanity which in any of its parts would have done as they were doing. The opportunity came to Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate ; and they put Him to death because they were men, and in them as in the rest of mankind sin was working. This does not excuse them, but it involves the entire race. No matter who the man is, of what tribe, or country, or age, or rank, if sin gets its way within him, arousing selfishness and greed, he will do the basest and most despicable deeds chance will allow him. They who congratulate themselves that they did not nail the Lord Jesus to the accursed tree, should remember that it so happened that the opportunity did not come to them, and that the crime lies, not so much against the persons to whom it did come, as against a quality which all men possess in common. But for sin, there had been no necessity for a Saviour ; and but for sin, men had not crucified Him. Thus it is that responsibility really falls upon each one of us, though of course

not the guilt of the act; and Christ dies, not so much because of the Jewish priests and elders, but rather because of the sin which enters into every child born into the world. And, therefore, as Christ came to save from sin all who would be saved, His prayer may be conceived as having a wider range than that of the folk immediately effecting His death. He looks out upon humanity itself: diseased and enslaved by sin, and overcome in imagination and will by forces inimical to righteousness.

So with all reverence, keeping in mind that He does not speak of what His enemies were doing to Him corporeally, we venture to think that at this time He recalls the conflict which through the ages has gone on between God and Satan, and good and evil, of which Calvary is but a part. Since the day when man first recognized the difference between right and wrong, the struggle has been ceaseless. Ignorance, far more than wilfulness, led him astray; but ignorance has not saved him from consequences. Poison has the same effect, whether men know it to be poison, or do not know it. Disease does not wait for the person it attacks to acquire a knowledge of it; and sin works the like ills in both foolish and wise. In far away generations, man had

The age-long struggle between holiness and sin.

served as gods the host of heaven, the creatures of earth, and the products of his own hands. He had shed innocent blood again and again. He had corrupted himself with unspeakable abominations. The whole story is black with sin and shame. And if, ever and anon, some thought or emotion, holy and divine, sprang up within or came to him from without urging him to a more excellent life, too often man found himself unable to cope with the evil or to subdue the poison which pervaded his nature. Mad with sin, he knew not what he did; and yet sin filled up his lot with misery, hopelessness, and gloom. For all these victims, though their lives were stained and blackened by vice and wrong, Christ pleads.

"Many waters
cannot quench
love."

When we reflect not only upon the brutality done at the Cross, but also upon the power and results of sin in human life, and how easily man persuades himself in favour of wrong, we wonder that God should have had mercy on man and considered him worth saving. His love and His faith were indeed inexhaustible. But at no moment in the Passion of our Saviour are we more impressed by that fact than in this prayer for His enemies. In His human nature, as with any other man, the temptation to resentment must

have been urgent. Sin stood ready to impart some bodily and mental relief. One angry thought, and sin having justified it would have won. He is tried to the uttermost. Why should He not be provoked at men who were causing Him such pain? As we ponder over these things, we behold glory suffusing the Cross. He dies unto sin.

Having lifted Him up and affixed on the Cross over His head the *titulus*, on which was written the charge for which he was condemned, the soldiers had opportunity to look after their own interests. The perquisites to the guards on these occasions were the clothes of the criminal and whatever other property he may have had upon his person. So these men divided among themselves the garments of the Nazarene,—the turban or head-gear, the cloak, the girdle, and the sandals: His small earthly belongings. The inner robe, extending from the neck to the feet, some scholars say like the tunic or byssina of a priest, and others say according to the fashion of the Galilean peasants, was not sewed, but woven or knitted throughout, and could not be divided without destroying it. The soldiers therefore decided to cast lots whose it should be. The legends that have been fabricated

The soldiers
divide the
spoils.

concerning this vesture, though intended to do honour to Him whose it was, are too shadowy and puerile for consideration. But the contrast was stupendous and deplorable between the play of the soldiers at the foot of the Cross, over a few garments almost valueless, and the Sacrifice going on at this time, of eternal and incalculable worth. The heartlessness and haste of the soldiers, their hands still moist with the blood of their Victim, greedily appropriating His little possessions, perchance annoyed that they were not of greater value, if they do not astonish, at least distress all who read the narrative. To St. John and the Blessed Virgin, who seem now to have reached Calvary, the spectacle must have been sad beyond measure. And all was done as though He were nothing—a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people! —Type of the multitude who turn aside from the serious things of life and devote themselves to the mean and trivial!

The Evangelists held that this happened according to prediction.

In this incident the writers of both Matthew and John saw the fulfilment of prophecy: "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." Dean Alford warns the reader to beware of any evasion of *ὅρα* = "in order that": thereby holding that the act should be regarded as so

happening that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Such, too, was the belief of the writer of the Fourth Gospel: "these things *therefore* the soldiers did."

Cf. The Prayer before the Passion, p. 118.

The guards sit down and watch the crosses, lest there should be any attempt at rescue. The mob linger and wait for anything that may happen to add excitement to the horrible affair. Some leading men, priests and rabbis, forgetful of their dignity, mingle with the bystanders, and, for fear that even now there should be sympathy shown or faith excited in the Nazarene, deride and speak evil of Him. Curiously enough, though they could not enter Pilate's hall, they discerned no incongruity on this great day in visiting Golgotha. Some exclaim, "He saved others, let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God"; others, "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe"; and others again, "He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God." Passers-by stop and enquire. When they understand who it is that is immolated, they, too, take up the now popular outcry. They wag their heads, and rail at Him: "Ha! thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thy-

Sin, not yet satisfied, expresses itself in vituperation.

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self, and come down from the cross." The soldiers also join in the clamour: "If thou art the King of the Jews, save thyself." Not only so, but the two bandits crucified with Him, reproach and revile Him. Thus the din and clatter went on; a noisy, villainous crowd, insanely indifferent to the wrongs done their fellow-man.

Christ withholds power that He may show power still greater.

Little did these spectators of the Saviour's Passion imagine that in His refusal to come down from the Cross, and thus, as they said, display a proof of His Messiahship, He would give to the world a more convincing proof than this could possibly have been. Had He done as they taunted Him with not being able to do, not only would He have frustrated His own purpose and have left unaccomplished His Sacrifice, but He would also have failed to convert them to any recognition of His claims. They would have explained away the fact of crucifixion. He had not been fastened on the Cross aright. There had been some deception in the matter; perhaps some magic which wonder-workers knew of. Better evidence than the descent from the Cross would have been, was His breaking open the gates of Hades, and His rising again from the dead,—not the regathering of the energies of a life which had not yet passed away, but the bring-

ing back of a life that had fled. Had He come down from the Cross no one would have believed ; but when the tidings of Easter were spread abroad, multitudes acknowledged the triumph of Jesus of Nazareth ; indeed, in the change from the revilings around the Cross to the alleluias of the Resurrection all mankind beheld the proof which Israel's priests and rabbis had vainly desired.

The coincidences between these doings at Calvary and the descriptions set forth in the Twenty-second Psalm are so strikingly close, that we may well recall the ancient utterances, without turning aside to discuss the question whether the latter were prophetic of the former, or the former selected or coloured to agree with the latter. Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Calvin pointed out how inapplicable to the Messiah are some of the most striking expressions, but the one was condemned for his views by the Fifth Ecumenical Council, and the other has been barely sustained by a thin scattering of scholars. There are also differences of opinion as to the authorship and occasion of the psalm,—whether it depicts David's troubles during his persecution by Saul, or Jeremiah's sorrow when he was cast into prison as an apostate, or the bitter trials which came to Israel in the time of the Exile. In

See, *e.g.* Neale, Cheyne, and Delitzsch on this Psalm.

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none of these circumstances, however, were such straits or distresses reached as are here described. Possibly Israel came nearest to them in the Babylonian captivity. The oldest Jewish explanations of the psalm referred it to Christ, and one of the ancient rabbis declared that the Messiah in the midst of his sufferings would sing this psalm aloud. The Christian reader will appreciate the satisfaction with which the Evangelist traced out in the events the resemblances to the predictions; and if they dwelt upon these points of likeness, bringing them out from among other facts into clear relief, it was by no means at the expense of truth.

Ps. xxii.
6-18; Prayer-
Book Version.

“ But as for me, I am a worm, and no man :
a very scorn of men, and the outcast of
the people.

All they that see me laugh me to scorn :
they shoot out their lips, and shake their
heads, saying,

He trusted in God, that he would deliver
him :

let him deliver him, if he will have him.

But thou art he that took me out of my
mother's womb :

thou wast my hope, when I hanged yet
upon my mother's breasts.

I have been left unto thee ever since I was
born :

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thou art my God even from my mother's womb.

O go not from me, for trouble is hard at hand :

And there is none to help me.

Many oxen are come about me :

fat bulls of Basan close me in on every side.

They gape upon me with their mouths :

as it were a ramping and a roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint :

my heart also in the midst of my body is even like melting wax.

My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums :

and thou shalt bring me into the dust of death.

For many dogs are come about me :

and the council of the wicked layeth siege against me.

They pierced my hands and my feet ;—I may tell all my bones :—

they stand staring and looking upon me.

They part my garments among them :
and cast lots upon my vesture."

Thus the dreary hours drag on ; the heat deepens ; and exposed to the glare of the sun, and the rude talk and inquisitive gaze of the spectators, Christ passes further on into His sufferings. To the confusion of ribaldry, jest,

The winning of the first soul by the Cross.

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and taunt He gives no attention. He opens not His mouth; but waits the coming of death. Yet before the gloom gathers for the great darkness, from Him comes a manifestation of kingly power. In the shadow of His Cross, so tradition says, salvation came to one of the dying bandits. In despair and malignity of soul, hardened by pain,—type of those in whom suffering has an ill effect,—one of the malefactors renewed his abuse, and cried, “Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us.” The angry tone and sarcastic words provoked the other malefactor to remonstrance. He was passing through the like pain, yet the opposite effect was being wrought. “Dost thou not even fear God,” he asked, “seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” Grace had begun a good work in this man’s heart. Earlier he, too, had reproached Christ, joining in the general hue and cry: now, having rebuked his comrade, and, perhaps, being encouraged by the prayer of Christ for His murderers, and by His silent and patient demeanour, he prays, “Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.”

Luke xxiii. 42.

The cry for mercy came late in the man’s

life, but not too late for the Lord Jesus. Grace passed swiftly from the King to the penitent. He who had raised Lazarus from the dead, now raises a criminal from sin and translates him into the Kingdom of God. As in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, came the gift of faith and the disclosure of knowledge, so mightily that, in spite of the scoffing multitude and his own pain, this poor degraded, despised outcast saw in Jesus the King! At the moment he was the only man in the world who did : the only man in all the world who believed, not only that Jesus was a King, but that He would return and set up His Kingdom. With one breath, as it were, he rose out of the depths of sin, and reached the heights where of all the children of earth he stood the first subject in the new Kingdom. The transformation displays the power of grace. Dishonoured and thrown out, soon to be forgotten by all who had known him, his name to disappear from among men, yet he dares to pray that he may be in the mind of the King. He has been with Him in His shame, can he not be with Him in His glory? He does not ask that he shall be spared the punishment of his crimes, or that his pains shall be lessened. Repentance seeks more eagerly to be rid of the sin than to escape its

The prayer of
the penitent
thief.

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retribution. To this man these consequences were as nothing beside the fact of the life beyond : and, sinful and lonely, he was going rapidly thither. Nor in his cry for help has he aught to plead for himself. He has no excuse, no merit, no claim. Nothing in his favour, but the mercy of God,—and that is all-sufficient. “Remember me, O Jesus, when thou comest in thy kingdom!”

The Second
of the Seven
Last Words.

He who had foretold that were He lifted up from the earth He would draw all men unto Him, now, being lifted up, and being ever ready to give grace to the humble, opens wide the gates of life and of hope to the penitent thief : “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”

Luke xxiii. 43.

Christ came to
save sinners.

The world has little pity for men such as this thief. People who know little of the perils of the field where some are forced to struggle with evil, oftentimes single-handed, do not always show sympathy to those who, failing to hold their own, have fallen stained, wounded, and helpless. They think it would be better for the race were such to perish,—and from the point of view they take, something may be said for their opinion. But therein lies one of the differences between the world and Christianity. The world concludes because its attempts at reformation or correction fail

that there are conditions beyond remedy : that when a man or woman has fallen to a certain depth in crime it is useless to try to help them. They are not worth the effort. On the other hand, heaven holds that even such as they are not hopelessly or irretrievably lost ; the Church is called upon to put forth her strength to help them : Christ died that they might live. This thief may never have had his chance till now. Christ saw that the man could be saved : that grace would not be refused. He heard the entreaty ; and He loved the castaway. The people of that day who called themselves "good" were astonished and perplexed that He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. They disliked the companionship allowed by this Teacher. Now, in His death, He is numbered, not with kings, priests, scholars, or saints, not even with His disciples, but with the most abandoned of evil-doers. Associations, however, do not obscure His glory or diminish His power, any more than the pestilent marsh affects the beauty of the sun. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The thief spoke of the future ; but in His gracious answer the King speaks of to-day. Though the body shall die, the man shall live on ; and before this burning sun shall set, the

Christ's blood
so cleanses
from sin that
man enters
the presence
of God.

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man shall be with Him in Paradise. The word stood for that happiness, peace, and purity which make beautiful and desirable the visions of the life beyond death,—the realm where in conscious and satisfying felicity the blessed ones await the resurrection, and, taught as none can be taught in this world, are prepared for the still greater joy and unceasing work of heaven. Out of the reach of temptation and in familiar intercourse with the Lord Jesus, the former things shall have passed away for ever, and instead of sin there shall be holiness, and instead of pain, peace. Thus it came about, that our Lord entered the presence of His Father, not with the best and greatest of earth, but with one who had been profligate, disgraced, and convicted of crime, —a rescued sinner, the first trophy of His salvation!

Suffering not
the same when
God is with us.

Till death came, the suffering of the cross was not less. None of the pain was taken away. But the penitent was not the same. Christ was with him in the Valley of the Shadow, and he was the only one in the awful hours of Calvary who approached in experience as well as in sympathy the sufferings of our Lord. He was happy. The nails held his hands and feet, but the chains had fallen from his soul. When death comes,

he shall leave his cross with all its pain, and go singing up to his crown. But while he is rejoicing in the prospect of the new life assured him, the Saviour journeys on His way alone into deeper darkness.

It may be that our Lord saved one man at the last moment that none might despair, and only one that none might presume—a deduction deserving of serious thought. This, however, takes into consideration only the condition of the sinner, and overlooks the work of the Saviour. Possibly this man, like so many other men, had bestowed little attention upon religious questions or spiritual development, and in his ignorance or indifference ran no danger either of despair or of presumption. He had lived without God, and therefore anticipated nothing of the peril of dying without God. The marvel is that in a heart foreign to those impulses and aspirations which led men such as St. John and St. Peter to follow Christ, grace could arouse the consciousness of sin, the desire for holiness, and the recognition of Jesus as the King. There had been nothing in his career, so far as we know, to lead one to expect a change so radical and complete. Conjecture, indeed, has it that some fragments of the teaching of Jesus had reached

The power of grace to awaken life in a soul dead to knowledge and virtue.

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this man, if he had not heard Him himself ; and he certainly knew the cause for which Jesus was condemned, and the expectation of the Messiah and the Kingdom. But up to this time these matters, if thought of at all, had had no influence upon his conduct. Now, in the awakening, things forgotten or slighted come to mind, and he beholds in them that of which hitherto he had never so much as dreamed. More wonderful still than this coming to the light is the assurance of Christ that this convert shall at once attain the bliss which others have sought by discipline, devotion, self-sacrifice, and benevolent enterprise, perhaps prolonged through many years. He was verily an exemplification of the labourers who had wrought but the one hour. He had had no preparation. All that his life had earned for him was death. Nor is anything said about purgation in the other life before he entered Paradise. On the contrary, the last becomes first—the most unlikely of the sons of earth takes his place among the spirits of just men made perfect.

The unfailing
power of
Christ.

Herein is made manifest the unique and unlimited sovereignty of Christ. In His death unto sin He makes a Sacrifice which can save and cleanse the penitent from all sin. If the

contrite thief be regarded as an exception, nevertheless his case proves what Christ can do. Not only does He redeem from sin, but He changes the whole man. That which may be a slow process in some, may be instantaneous in others, according as He wills. The revelation on the Cross of His grace and love sets forth both the purpose of His Passion, and also the truth that He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. These were the glad tidings which won for Christianity its early triumphs; and which through the ages have never been proclaimed without obtaining response. None so far gone in sin or towards perdition that grace cannot help or that Christ cannot save!

The authenticity of some of these Words from the Cross, including these first two, has been questioned, without sufficient reason, however, to justify its denial. But should it fall out that the Words were added to the narrative on legendary hearsay rather than on historical evidence, they at least indicate the appreciation the Evangelists had of the character of our Lord, and the interpretation they gave to His mission. If they put the Words in His mouth, they were sure the Words were such as He would have said had occasion offered. That He did say them, however, no

No reason to doubt the genuineness of these Words from the Cross.

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Isa. lxi. 1-3;
Luke iv. 18,
19.

one need doubt. And in the mercy shown the repentant malefactor appears a close correspondence with the work which prophecy had declared to be peculiar to the Messiah: "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;"—"to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

The Third of
the Seven
Last Words.

Time moved slowly on. Noon was nigh. The crowd became less noisy. Nearer the Cross gathered the Beloved Disciple and some of the women: the Blessed Virgin, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Perhaps some of the other disciples were also there. The feelings of these friends can be imagined. They may have lost faith in His Messiahship and in His power to save Himself, but they loved Him as their own. We are not told that they talked with Him, or in any way disturbed His thoughts. But His eyes resting on His mother and the Disciple whom He loved, He said, "Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold thy mother!"

John xix. 26,
27.

The earlier Words showed forth Christ as a Priest, interceding for men who knew not that they were sinners, and as a King, granting

salvation to one who had made the discovery both of himself and of Jesus. Now comes a revelation of Himself as a Friend, in which He teaches the sacredness of human ties and sorrows, and His sympathy therewith. His Sacrifice was not to destroy the relationships in life, but to lay stress upon them and to consecrate them. Some of the best of men have endeavoured to suppress human feelings ; and even now it is not uncommon to hear people say, especially mothers in reference to their children, that if they love too much, God will take away the object of their love.

Our Blessed Lord in vital touch with every phase of human nature.

Our Divine Redeemer had no such conception of God or of human life. He Himself had lived in the sunshine and amid the flowers of Nazareth ; had played there as a child, and sang there the song of youth ; and had known the sweetness and joy of a mother's love. The affliction of the sisters at Bethany and the anticipation of the woe that should waste Jerusalem moved Him to tears. He rejoiced in the attachment of the Disciples, and particularly of him who now stood near the Cross ; and none could love a mother more than He. So with little children, and with all who were dependent or in pain. He possessed all the characteristics and qualities of our nature, except of course those of sin.

Asceticism not a necessary part of the religion of Jesus.

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God made the family; and God lived in the family. He knew, and none knew better than He, that the friendships we make and the relations into which we come, one with another, are hallowed in God's sight. And notwithstanding His mission, and the burden which lay upon Him, He entered into the happiness of life with all the freedom and exuberance of His pure, noble, and unselfish disposition. His affection for those around Him did not exclude or weaken His love for God, or for humanity, or for vocation, any more than our love for those near and dear to us need do. On the contrary, the very strength of the higher love gave a deeper and broader meaning to the fondness for those who had been with Him in His daily life.

His love for
His Mother.

So He looked upon the Woman who had been so dear to Him, and into whose heart the sword had been driven with well nigh deadly thrust, and, understanding and appreciating her affection and distress, He gives her into the care of the Beloved Disciple. The bitterest of days is hers; yet at the Cross, though she shall lose her Son, she shall find her God. And St. John, probably the youngest of the Twelve: generous, strong, hearty, sympathetic: ever doing tender and loving service to his Master: not afraid to be

near Christ, in the palace of the High Priest, and now under the Cross: he who loved Jesus best, shall at this moment be entrusted with a most solemn duty. All that Jesus had in the world was His Mother: no home, no possessions, nowhere to lay His head. He is her only Child: no other is there to protect and provide for her. And thus, though in the way to redeem the world, His thought goes out to her. Nothing could more clearly show both the reality of His love and His complete self-control.

It should be observed, that He does not reproach His Mother or the Beloved Disciple for their grief, or put forth any attempt to stay their tears. To Him sorrow and suffering were positive and inevitable experiences. He does not treat them with indifference, as though they existed only in fancy. His is not a stoical, hard, cold religion. Separation had come. Even though He realizes, as His loved ones could not, the continuity of life, He sympathizes with them in their dejection and loneliness. He understands their distress and disappointment: *He* was being taken away, and there would be a desolate home at Nazareth. An answer this to those who think that afflictions are necessarily evidences of God's anger, or the signs of sin. Job

Afflictions no
evidence of
God's dis-
pleasure.

was tried by severe calamities, though he was a righteous man; and to the Blessed Virgin and St. John came sore trouble, yet by no fault of theirs. Jesus loved them, and suffered with and for them. So in our bereavements: He understands and comes close to us. What is to be reprehended is the sorrow without hope, the anguish of despair, in which man doubts God's wisdom and providence, and forgets the life beyond and the glory of resurrection.

Unwise to
give way to
sorrow.

Nor should it be overlooked, that in seeking to comfort His Mother and His Disciple, He placed upon them duties and responsibilities. After all, the readiest solace for grief and the surest remedy for bereavement is work: not sitting down, weeping, and murmuring against the inevitable and the unalterable, but occupying the time and the attention with reasonable and everyday duties. So we are told that "from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." The words naturally mean that from that time St. John undertook the charge and care of the Blessed Virgin; and, by the way, also imply that the Apostle was not without either property or position. Henceforth wherever he lived, she should be an inmate of his habitation. Further, the words have been taken to indicate that the

Apostle and the Blessed Virgin at once went away from Calvary; as probably the other women also did. The scene was indeed harrowing and exhausting, yet, unless He positively sent them away, as in His compassion He may have done, it is not easy to think that these loving ones left Him before they had seen the end.

This incident, showing so comfortingly the thorough oneness of our Lord with us, for the moment relieves the distress of Calvary. We understand so little of that mystery of Sacrifice; indeed the circumstances unite in carrying our thoughts into regions far away of bewilderment and awe. But this tenderness of Christ for His Mother brings Him so into our common, personal life, that immediately we feel we have gained a clear view into His very nature. He loves as we love; and knows anxiety as we know it. And though He is a Priest and a King, divine and unapproachable in excellence and majesty, yet is He also Man, sharing with us the ordinary experiences of human life.

We should, however, probably miss the meaning of this Third Word if we think of it only as providing relief for His Mother. It suggests, and indeed indicates, much more than that. By it Christ gently, but surely, severs the mere tie of bodily relationship. From this

In this Word Christ is revealed as one of us.

The relationship of Christ to man, however, is henceforth not to be of blood.

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2 Cor. v. 16.

time on He is not to be spoken of, or spoken to, as though He were only or no more than one of us according to natural law. "Though we have known Christ after the flesh," says St. Paul, "yet now we know him so no more." Even the Blessed Virgin must realize that He passes from her through death into a changed and higher condition. He can no longer be exclusively hers.

Matt. xii. 50.

"Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." The union of Christ with man is now not after the flesh, that is to say, in the possession of a common nature derived from human parentage; but after the spirit, that is to say, by virtue not of Christ having been born into the world, but of man having been born into the Kingdom of God. Closer than physical sonship or affinity, are the ties which come from a common participation in heavenly virtues and Christly graces, and giving evidence of their existence by a life of holiness. He who loves to do the thing which is right, and endeavours earnestly to prove his emotion by his practice, has entered into a real and an enduring kinship with his heavenly Father. By His Sacrifice, Christ is lifted up to receive adoration and to give forth power, to draw to Himself, irrespective of race or rank, all who would know God, and to bind

into one communion those who are one with Him in sincerity and affection. Thus it is that they who are baptized into God become members of the one family in Christ Jesus, brethren of the Son of God ; with new connexions, fresh joys, and a common expectation.

Since the Son of Man was lifted up, three hours have gone by, lingering and pain-laden hours, and now with the noon begins the strange darkness. The Beloved Disciple, so general opinion runs, had taken away the Blessed Virgin ; and if other friends of the Master remained,—as seemliness leads us to hope they did, St. Peter at least,—no mention is made of them. The crowd of idle, mocking folk, and the party of priests and scribes, which had gathered round the Cross seem to have decreased, hastening back to the city, perhaps, because of the sullen, gathering clouds and threatening storm. No longer molested by His enemies, Jesus was left to enter alone into the silence and the shadows. “And, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.”

“I will darken the earth in the clear day.”
Amos viii. 9.

Gen. xv. 12.

So far as the physical phenomenon is concerned, much dispute has been waged and wasted. If it be taken for granted that the Evangelists intended to convey the idea that the whole earth, or at least the province of

Of the extent of the darkness.

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Judea, was enveloped in this darkness, speculation and discussion could scarcely be avoided. Such was the opinion of the Fathers, and till of late years, among the moderns, few have disputed it. Gibbon affects surprise that in an age of science and history, when writers such as Seneca and Pliny the Elder were curiously and laboriously collecting records of extraordinary phenomena, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, no mention should have been made of so preternatural an occurrence. It is said that the so-called *Acts of Pilate*, containing the report of Pilate to Rome, referred to the great darkness, and stated that "lamps were lighted in the whole world"; but this statement merely affords evidence that at the time it was made such was the general belief. It is further alleged, and formerly the account was supposed to have a close bearing on this question, that the Pagan philosopher Phlegon, a native of Tralles in Lydia, writing in the reign of Hadrian, about A.D. 137, recorded in his work on the Olympiads, that in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, *i.e.* in the year from July A.D. 33 to A.D. 34, there was the greatest eclipse of the sun ever known, that it became night at the sixth hour of the day, so that the stars appeared, and that at the same time there was a great earthquake in Bithynia, which

Gibbon, chap.
xv.

See, *e.g.* the
Speaker's
Commentary,
Matt. xxvii. 45.

overthrew the larger part of the city of Nicea. It is possible that Phlegon was mistaken in his date, for in the year he gives there was no eclipse of the sun ; and though he appears to have had some knowledge of Christ, he does not connect the phenomenon he records with Him. Earthquakes might indeed extend from the shores of the Black Sea into Judea, some six or seven hundred miles distant ; but an earthquake in Bithynia would hardly account for the darkness at Calvary. To be sure, the darkening of the sun usually precedes an earthquake, and, as we shall see, the death of Christ is said to have been followed by a rending of the rocks. Nor was the weird obscurity which overspread the land caused by an eclipse, for the moon was now full ; and at no time does the deep umbra of an eclipse last for three hours. We may dismiss the record of Phlegon as having nothing whatever to do with the matter. But if the darkness were world-wide, there can be no question of its miraculous origin,—and Gibbon's cavil would not be without reason.

We are not obliged, however, to regard the darkness as either extraordinary or extensive. Most likely it was the thick, oppressive haze which comes up in Syria with the sirocco from the desert,—clouds black and lowering,

The darkness only remarkable for its coincidence.

and, as St. Luke says, "the sun's light failing." It may have been the darkness which precedes an earthquake: by no means an uncommon phenomenon, sometimes passing quietly away without any disturbance. The cold night seems to have been followed by a hot morning, and this commonly presaged storm. Nor is it necessary to suppose that the gloom extended more than from the horizon on the one side to the horizon on the other: let us say, around as far as the eye could reach. The expression "over all the earth or land" means no more in this instance than it does in the narrative of the deluge: the whole region or country within the vision of the spectator. Had there been in this darkness anything uncommon, one wonders if Jerusalem would have associated it with the crime which had been committed that day by the leaders of Israel.

Nature herself
concerned in
Christ.

That the Fathers thought otherwise, and believed that the phenomenon was supernatural and attested to the truth of the Son of God, showed the influence upon them of the fact that the whole creation was concerned in the salvation wrought by Christ. He was the Word of the Father, and all things were made by Him. Wherever the spirit of Christ went, there man would be influenced by a

gentler feeling towards all living things. He would regard and treat them considerately, and make use of them for purposes which should be for happiness and good, rather than for misery and ill. Therefore the Fathers fancied that at this time Nature paid homage to her Lord, and in reverence the light failed and the birds stilled their song, and the sun sought to hide from himself the shameful spectacle now presented of man's cruelty and sin. Moreover, there had once spread over Egypt a darkness that might be felt, and upon the world at large had long rested gross darkness: even as in the 'ages far away darkness reigned upon the face of the deep. And now, thereby bringing to Him the experiences common to His brethren, had come to the Son of Man, "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness." Joel ii. 2.

These deductions may appear to us strained and visionary, but they do not touch the actual coincidence of the darkness and of the earthquake with which the tragedy of Calvary ended. The Evangelists merely record the falling together of these events, and draw therefrom no moral; thereby neither claiming it as a miracle nor adorning it with marvels which ingenuity soon invented, such as the

Coincidences
may be of
God.

story that at the same time that Christ died every green leaf in the world withered. But the devout mind is likely to discern in these coincidences the hand of God. If it be admitted that the universe is under the control and guidance of its Creator and Lord, and that He has an immediate concern in the welfare and destiny of His people, it is no matter of surprise that He should make conditions work together to serve His purpose. It is at least quite as difficult to suppose that coincidences simply happen of themselves.

The darkness
and terror of
isolation.

The darkness over sky and land, however, was of small significance compared with the darkness which seems to have entered into the soul of our Divine Redeemer. The physical agonies deepen into the intensity of spiritual anguish. The light of God which had sustained Him hitherto in all His trials passes away. No angel remains to minister to Him. Upon Him there comes a great horror,—stranger than that which fell upon Abraham at the going down of the sun : not only had men and angels left Him, but apparently His Heavenly Father had given Him up. He is alone : helpless by Himself ! Even were it possible, no mind dare follow Him into the silence and solitude. None may ever know

the sufferings of Jesus in those hours of speechless grief. This, however, is evident, and being evident is intended for us to contemplate: He no longer felt the joy of union with the Father. Not that the Divine consciousness could have been extinguished; but in His human nature, which only was the suffering and dying nature, He reached the deepest abyss of woe possible for man to reach. He realized the loneliness, the desperate isolation, of the soul in its fiercest sorrows. A boundless desert of grief: no sound, no voice,—the winds still, and the beat of the sunbeams on the sands gone!

This experience may have been the height of the Passion. Of all that had happened to Christ, so far as God has permitted us to see, there had been nothing more fearful. In a furious and tremendous effort, as a last chance, against Him drew near the Prince of Darkness to cut Him off from God,—the last temptation: more terrible than that of hunger in the wilderness. He is made to feel what it is for a human soul knowingly to be without God. Perhaps, too, the Adversary cast a doubt upon the efficacy of the Sacrifice. After all, these adversities, pains, and reproaches may be for naught. Else why should God

The end of the temptations.

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hide as it were His face from Him? Never came suggestion of evil more mightily to mortal man. In the weakness of possible estrangement, cannot He now be forced to let go His purpose? Will He die unto this sin?

When God
ceases to make
Himself
known.

Job xix. 8, 9.

The silence of God! And some time or other in life's pilgrimage darkness encloses most men, and especially those who are trying by obedience and holiness to get nearer to God. So Job said, "He hath set darkness in my paths; he hath stripped me of my glory." And we pray, and weep, and wait; and oftentimes God makes no answer. Or, perhaps, we have not the ears to hear: the pain is the same. So easy is it to believe when the evidences are at hand and are abundant; but not so easy in the dull days, when the heart is heavy, the silence unbroken, and Satan using his opportunity. This experience, common among men, must of necessity be the experience of Him who came to earth to pass through our trials. And beside the experience, like a cruel, grim spectre from the realms of death, stands Despair, ready to snatch away the remnants of faith to which the soul so wearily and pitifully clings. Thus sin confronted Christ in its most formidable might.

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More that this, as is plainly revealed, Jesus must anticipate, even to the verge of experiencing, the deplorable condition of a lost and abandoned soul, that He may behold in all their dreadful reality the depths of misery into which, in this world as well as in the world beyond, sin plunges its victim. It is from falling irretrievably into these bottomless depths that He shall save man. And that redemption, be it kept in mind, is effected, not by the example and beauty of His stainless and obedient life, but by the Sacrifice He made of Himself in this journey alone through the valley of the shadow of death.

A still more significant purpose.

The darkness lingered three long hours. Except perhaps for the low voices of the soldiers and the few lookers-on, and the moans of the dying bandits, Calvary is still. Possibly along the horizon the heavy, sullen clouds are beginning to break,—the light creeping across the hill-tops making the gloom more impressive than ever. The end is near. Suddenly the silence is disturbed by a loud voice from the Cross: a cry of helpless anguish, rather than of despair, reproach, or disappointment. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The Sacrifice was indeed pierced with the

The Fourth of the Seven Last Words.

Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34.

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flame of the altar. The isolation had become more than the soul of the Son of Man could endure. He would die, and not the shadow of a change of purpose on that point came near Him; but He could not die without God.

Does this
Word refer
to the past or
to the present?

And yet some scholars have thought that rather than the cry betokening the extreme limit of endurance, it marked the consummation of the trial. For the words, "hast forsaken" may not refer to the present but to the past: "Why didst thou forsake me?" So Bengel suggests, and the meaning of the exclamation becomes somewhat plainer. He had gone through the struggle alone; not even God had been with Him; and now that the battle has been fought and won, He marvels that His Father had left Him alone. This is possible, but it converts the utterance from an expression of faith into one of complaint. And not only of complaint; but almost of reproach, as though He thought God had not done that which He should have done. Even though the verb is in the aorist—ἐγκατέλιπες—the marginal note in the Genevan version of the New Testament probably comes nearer to the meaning: "Notwithstanding that he feebleth himself as it were wounded with God's wrath and forsaken for our sins: yet he ceaseth not

to put his confidence in God, and call upon him."

In this utterance our Lord used the opening words of the Twenty-second Psalm, possibly from the Aramaic version. St. Mark's record of the words used is supposed to be the more accurate. They who stood by misinterpreted the words "Eloi! Eloi!" Some exclaimed, "This man calleth Elijah!" Others said, "Let be: let us see whether Elijah cometh to take him down." As the soldiers were not likely to know anything about Elijah, they who spoke were probably some of the Jewish party left to see that the execution was fully carried out. Elijah was popularly regarded as the one who guided souls to Paradise; and the bystanders may honestly have thought that Christ was calling upon the prophet to hasten to His deliverance. On the other hand, the words "Let be," may have been spoken in hateful irony: "The presumption of such as He, calling upon either God or the prophet! Wait and see!"

The people who heard this Word gave it a wrong meaning.

They did not know that this cry was the expression of the triumph of faith. We, too, are not able to perceive all that the Word meant; but this at least is clear, the appeal to God was the assurance that Satan had lost in the struggle. Christ resisted the temptation to

The Victory won.

S

pass through death alone. It was too perilous a thing for man to do. And though the realization had become obscure, yet in the long and trying hours of darkness, as through all His earthly life, God remained beside the Saviour. Not only had He given the angels charge concerning Him, but He Himself watched and sustained Him at all times, and especially when the trial was fiercest, and the strength lowest—perhaps, if we may presume to imagine, when as man our Blessed Lord was scarcely, if at all, conscious of any influence or virtue coming to Him. Neither had the waters of sorrow which had swept so wildly and deeply over the Master's soul quenched His love for the Father. Temptation had not prevailed against Him. In every condition and circumstance of human life He had held out against sin. He asks the question, "Why?" The answer is not vouchsafed us. But the soul that in the unutterable loneliness can still speak of God as "my God," discovers the certainty of the Divine Presence before the words have left the lips. It was so at this time. The clouds break away : the light falls in refreshing glory. Satan had contended unceasingly and cruelly ; yet, we repeat, in those three long hours Christ never gave sign or entertained thought of yielding. Were the

pain never so violent and severe, either of body or of soul, still He continued steadfast. He died unto sin !

The spiritual conflict seems to have ended with the cry to God ; the clouds of heaven and the clouds that had oppressed His soul began to lift ; and now the physical suffering again makes itself felt—the thirst of fever and the thirst of death. When about to be laid on the Cross, He could not drink the draught of wine mingled with myrrh offered Him, to dull or deaden consciousness. He must face death with mind awake and alert : realizing to the full its pain and terrors ; accepting voluntarily its fiercest fury, and conquering, not by weakness, but by active and triumphant submission. But now in His worn and wearied body comes the burning thirst. He is as one passing out of strife into rest ; and by this cry He shows the reality both of His pain and of His humanity.

The Word seems to have been uttered immediately after the cry for God, and while they that stood by were speaking about Elijah. St. John intimates that it was spoken, not of chance, or as springing out of the exigencies of the moment, but of design—"Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished [or, are now finished], that the Scripture might be

After the fast in the wilderness He was ahungered ; after the conflict at Calvary, athirst.

The Fifth of the Seven Last Words,

John xix. 28.

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fulfilled [or, accomplished], saith, I thirst." The Scripture referred to may have been the latter part of Psalm lxix. 21, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." It is possible, however, that the clause in St. John refers back to the things which had been accomplished, all of which the Evangelists held had been done that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and that Christ did not say, "I thirst," in order to carry out a prophecy.

Calvary again
brightened by
a gentle deed.

From a vessel set near by containing sour wine, the common drink of Roman soldiers, some one filled a sponge, and, putting it on a reed, ran and brought it to His mouth. Poor humanity's little kindness to its dying Lord! No hand was there to smooth His brow, and no voice to whisper words of cheer and hope: only a rude Pagan to place vinegar against His lips. He who showed this good will remains unknown, and yet the honour came to him of the last ministration to the Saviour of the world. Perhaps more than pity moved him to "run." The mercy that earlier found the thief and brought him home to God, may have gone out to this soldier and given him faith and light.

Some uses of
the figure of
"thirst."

As with the other Words from the Cross, much that is helpful has been deduced from this utterance. We must, however, avoid

reading into our Lord's words more than is justified by the occasion. He does indeed thirst for the souls of men, and this figure, denoting the strongest and most determined of all the desires or passions, suggests the intense, absorbing longing He has for those for whom He died. His love is a thirst that only our penitence and devotion can satisfy. And they who help their fellows onward and upward, so that they may see God, are doing for Christ more than the soldier did at the the Cross. Blessed, too, are the sons and daughters of earth who have known that hunger and thirst after righteousness which possessed the soul of the Psalmist, when he compared the longing of his soul for God with the desire of the hart for the water-brooks ; and of another Psalmist, "My soul gaspeth unto thee as a thirsty land." Though the Church in early ages was proscribed by law, and its adherents put in peril of their lives, yet when once the thirst for Christ made itself felt, there was no lack of folk to enter therein. So, in every generation, even now, though perhaps they attain not the desire and devotion of such as St. Augustine, or St. Teresa, or St. Francis de Sales, yet should they who have known the love of God be deprived of the springs of their joy, and be

Ps. xlii. 1 ;
lxiii. 1 ; cxliii.
6.

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no longer led beside the waters of comfort, having lost, say, the opportunities for the ministry of the Word, the worship of the sanctuary, or the intercourse with people likeminded and likehearted as themselves, and surer still, if the consciousness of communion with Christ be obscured, there comes to them the thirst that stays not till it is satisfied.

The Word
manifests the
complete
subjection of
Christ to the
necessities of
human nature.

But apt and true as these allusions may be, we have no right to assume that our Lord intended to make such in this Utterance. In physical stress no man is likely to enfold in his entreaty for relief suggestions of other thoughts and actions. His mind is bent only on the necessity demanding help. The fact, however, that Christ was in all points tried as we are, and in these physical necessities was made like unto His brethren, perfect through sufferings, so that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man, is an assurance that He sympathizes with His people in all their afflictions. He has gone in the way by which every child of earth must journey through the present life into the life beyond. He feels for us in every pain that strikes us. Our whole being, body as well as soul, is sacred to Him; and in vicissitude, illness, anxiety, and death, He watches over us, bears with us, pities us, and suffers with us. His

love and solicitude for those who have given themselves to Him is greater than that of a mother for her child. Pain may be evil in itself, but all things, even ill things, work together for good to them that love God. The ill is not always taken away: it is a means to an end that shall be for the highest good. So our Lord went through it all; and St. Paul, though he pleaded for relief from the thorn in the flesh, learned that God's grace was sufficient to enable him to bear it. Whatever may be the philosophy of suffering, it is certain that both the Captain of our Salvation and every other human being must suffer. God has so appointed it; and from the first such has been man's experience, and will continue to be, until in a better land it shall be ordained that "there shall be no more pain."

Strengthened by the act of the soldier, so that He could pass out of life in physical sensibility and spiritual power, our Divine Redeemer uttered the Sixth of the Seven Last Words: "It is finished." Far from this cry denoting that the sufferings had been either unnecessary or undeserved, that the injustice had come to an end none too soon, it proclaimed the fact, triumphantly and confidently, that He had accomplished the work which

The Sixth of
the Seven
Last Words.

John xix. 30.

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had been given Him to do. Notwithstanding the perplexity and anguish which assailed and held Him both in body and in soul, He had faced the fearful odds, resisted every subtilty and onslaught of the Adversary, looked into the very heart of sin, worked out the purpose of His coming into the world, and remained pure and true; and now He awaited the last stroke of man's invincible foe. Yet, as an ancient Christian hymn said, it was not Death that approached Christ, but Christ Death. He died without the help of Death: the Conqueror, and not the Conquered. His life was His own: "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And Christ went on His way, still the Master!

John x. 18.

Christ's Death
the purpose
and the most
important act
of His life.

Some may have said at the time, as some have said since, thereby showing gross misunderstanding of His predetermination and mission, "So young a life! What might He not have done had He been spared! Alas, that He should have been taken in the height of His usefulness, before His work was done!" But, while with most men life with its dreams, ambitions, and intentions is cut off, like a bird shot in the course of its flight, He had concluded everything that He had planned, had filled out the whole scheme that had been laid down at the beginning. There was nothing

wanting to complete His purpose. He did not die because of the persecution—that was but a means to the end, and could have been avoided; on the contrary, knowing what would happen, He deliberately went His way from the Mount of Transfiguration to Jerusalem. Nor did He die as the martyrs died, merely a witness to the truth; nor simply to teach men how to die, for upon them lies a restraint which they cannot evade, and which He voluntarily accepted. His design was more than this. By His death, and not by His life, beautiful and holy as it was, should be wrought the salvation of the world. His blood should be shed for the remission of sins. Having undertaken man's redemption, Calvary was inevitable. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up.” He should show the world that even in this present life man could die unto sin and live unto God. Not all the terrors of the Cross could drive Him from the right. In His victory He would gain the power or virtue, call it if you will the secret or mystery, which henceforth He would impart to all His brethren who desire to do as He had done. They, therefore, who think His end was premature, should remember that the hope of the world's salvation can helpfully be placed only

e.g., Luke ix.
31, 44, 51.

John iii. 14.

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in the Cross, and that the truths of Christianity gather to the death of the Son of man.

His enemies
were satisfied
all was over.

Doubtless when they saw Him crucified and dying, His enemies thought, in another sense, that the work of the Galilean was finished. He could harm them no more. The traditions of Israel were safe, and Annas's business in the courts of the Temple could go on without let or hindrance. Another innovator was gone. Now the people would walk undisturbed in the old ways. The Prophet of Nazareth, the Breaker of the Peace, the Antagonist, had been brought to an end. His pretensions were scattered to the winds. His influence was over. So since that day other enemies of the Faith have thought, as they dealt the blows beneath which the Church staggered and drooped. So some say of Christianity to-day, "It is finished!" History shows the falsity of such fancies in the past: no follower of the Nazarene doubts that the same emptiness will mark them in the future. They who indulge in them fail to discern the never-failing power of Christ.

Others were
glad that
the sufferings
were ended.

Perhaps, too, the Beloved Disciple, who, if he had taken away the Blessed Virgin, evidently had returned, the other disciples and friends, and some perhaps who without faith in Him had begun to pity the Sufferer, felt relieved

when the anguish and the agony were finished. They may have thought of Death as a merciful angel: and, as there are conditions in which life becomes unbearable, they thanked God for His compassion and rejoiced in their sorrow. This death was so different from that of the great prophet on the heights of Nebo. Both deaths were indeed lonely,—what death is not?—but a precious tradition told that God kissed Moses as he lay dying; while Jesus had been taken through the comfortless gloom, and had felt the keenness of torture, till at the last He stretched forth His hand and grasped Death. The one had been soothed to sleep; the other had looked Death in the face, and was not afraid. None of those who stood by knew that while Moses had been shown the Promised Land before he was taken away, Jesus had also seen in the repentant thief the first-fruits of the glorious Kingdom. And none of them imagined that this Man would do a greater thing than come down from the Cross: that He would burst asunder the bands of the grave; and, more stupendous even than that, He would break through the prison-doors, and free humanity from the ignorance and sin which so long had held it captive.

Finished, too, His friends and disciples probably thought were the hopes and expectations

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Even the
Visions
seemed to be
passing away.

Luke xxiv. 21.

John xiii. 7.

The promises
made to the
fathers were
now fulfilled.

He had created in them by His gracious words and deeds, and still more beautiful life. Never again would days come so rich in happy and priceless experiences as were the days when He was with them. Deep pathos lies beneath those words of the disciples in the way to Emmaus: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Love indeed is stronger than death, but love without faith becomes no more than a memory; and at this time faith was dying. Both friend and foe misunderstood the Word: as oftentimes now people interpret wrongly the utterances and revelations of God. In the light which soon came in unending clearness, the disciples learned the true meaning of the Saviour's Word. Instead of defeat, Death beheld triumph and the assurance of the return and continuance of that satisfaction in the fellowship of Christ, the fear of the loss of which had made the Disciples sad. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Now were indeed finished the types and prophecies which for so many generations had been interpreted as referring to the advent, the character, or the mission of the Messiah. Now that the true Victim had been offered, no purpose remained in the kindling of the sacrificial fire. On the Cross, of which the

ancient altars had been a figure, the Lamb of God had been slain. Neither singer nor seer would again foretell the coming of the day : the day had come. The mystery of the ages should now be made plain, the dispensation of the law ended, a long era of history closed. The former things were passing away : finished and done with. At the time no one so much as dreamed of these changes ; but later, when men had had time to think, and had seen the spreading of the light over the nations, they realized that the voices which came out of the darkness had spoken truth, and that the Kingdom of God was really established. Then they appropriated to the spiritual Israel the poetry, revelations, descriptions, figures and metaphors which in olden time had belonged to Israel after the flesh. As far as the old Israel was concerned, they were of no further use.

Now the Perfect Example is finished. There is no higher development of manhood possible. Both by word and example, Jesus has shown man the way by which he may be true to his nature, cultivate best the gifts given him, and live in this life to his own happiness and to God's glory. He Himself is now perfected : the Guide, to lead His people through the dark valleys and perplexing mazes of this earthly life ; the

Man finds his
highest ideal
of humanity
in Christ.

Redeemer, to save them from the saddest of all captivities, the service of sin and the fear of death; the Master, to teach them all things they should know of God and of His Kingdom; the Lord and King, to possess all power both in heaven and in earth. At Calvary Christ finished the experiences of the humiliation. Never again shall He be despised and rejected of men; never again, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Henceforth a redeemed and ransomed people shall look up to Him, worship Him, seek to follow in His footsteps, and find in Him everlasting joy.

The end reached for which Christ came into the world.

Thus the life of self-abnegation, tireless effort, and bitter suffering had not been in vain. The victory had been won in spite of apparently overwhelming difficulties: proof that success does not depend upon external conditions. Christ conquered in a wilderness; Adam failed in a paradise. And when from amidst the desolation of Calvary, the Crucified Lord uttered the Word, "It is finished," the way back to life was opened, the wall of partition was broken down, and the keystone was set in the arch spanning the gulf which through long generations had separated God and man. So the terror of death came to an end—at least for those who are one with

Christ: for having overcome the sharpness of death, He opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. From this time forth no child of God shall die! He may fall asleep; but he shall awake up after the likeness of his Lord, and be satisfied with the fulness of joy. Death struck so fiercely, that he lost and left his sting in Christ. His venom gone, his power is finished. All that he can now do is to stand as a servitor, and at the bidding of God open the gates for the ransomed of Zion to pass through on their way to the eternal glory.

A moment later, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, by an utterance restful, satisfied, and childlike, revealing depths of love and trust, our Divine Redeemer entrusted Himself to God: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." One thinks of those long and doubtful pilgrimages which the Egyptians imagined the dead had to take, from hall to hall, through corridor after corridor, observing many ceremonies and saying many prayers, before they reached the presence of the Lord of Life. Death is the gateway into the mystery which has perplexed humanity from the beginning; and when our Saviour passes into the shadows, requiring, as

The Last of
the Seven
Words.

Luke xxiii. 46.

all men require, some one to guide and protect Him, He gives up His soul for safe-keeping,—not to an angel, be he never so mighty-winged and loving, much less to the spirit of the grave, who, though sometimes spoken of as a kindly-disposed friend, nevertheless as an enemy stands ready to seize and to soothe into oblivion his victim,—but into the hands of God Himself, the only Life-giver : so that from Him He may receive it back again in imperishable power and glory. Having said these words, He bowed His head, as if after His toil and pain leaning upon His Father's breast, and all that men could see was over. The exodus had been made.

He laid down
His life.

The words accord with the voluntary character of Christ's death. "He poured out his soul unto death": implying *active*, rather than *passive*, submission. So St. Matthew, "He yielded up the ghost," or rather, "He, sent forth," or "discharged his spirit"; St. Mark and St. Luke, "He breathed out his spirit"; and St. John, "He surrendered the spirit." The Evangelists seem purposely to have avoided the use of the word "died": perhaps because the word implies a helplessness which they felt did not come to Him who met death only as a Master.

The last Utterance on the Cross, probably

repeated by our Lord from Psalm xxxi. 6, has become the Christian's song of life in the moment of death, and, consecrated by the holiest of all memories, has been used in their dying moments by many servants of God. St. Polycarp, St. Basil the Great, and St. Bernard; Charlemagne, St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. Louis of France, and Christopher Columbus; John Huss, Jerome of Prague, Martin Luther, and Bishop Ridley; Lady Jane Grey, Mary Queen of Scots, John Knox, and George Herbert; and multitudes, eminent and obscure, have gone out of death into life with these words on their lips. Thus, too, devout people lay themselves down to sleep. Thus, too, they think of the end. It means peace. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever": dwell—that is, sabbath there; rest there from toil and sorrow, as a traveller from a pilgrimage or a sufferer from pain. So for the people of God there remaineth a rest, that is to say, a Sabbath: the serenity and joy of the endless day. Our Lord at this time had come to the eve of the Sabbath; and the end was peace,—He was led forth beside the waters of comfort.

Others have made this Word their own.

The Hebrew text as pointed, has "I will return": Ps. xxiii. 6.

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, as the soul of Jesus went out to God,

The rending of the veil.

T

the priest entered the Holy Place to offer incense. The lot fell to the individual priest but once in his lifetime, and now blessed above his fellows, by being chosen to stand in the Divine Presence, doubtless this man hoped that God would give a revelation which should enrich him all his days. Perhaps it was he himself who told what he saw. He beheld, not as Zacharias, an angel beside the altar, but the veil which hid the Holy of Holies rent in twain from the top to the bottom. No prophecy or evidence of popular belief concerning this rending of the veil has been discovered. The Evangelists record the incident without designating any cause or making any inferences; but, in that it happened at this moment, remarkably and exactly coinciding with the death at Calvary, they could scarcely avoid thinking of the supernatural and miraculous. Read in the light of a generation later, no believer in Christ could doubt that in the hour of His triumph the Holy of Holies had been thrown open, and the Shekinah had departed. On the other hand, there is no intimation that they who rejected Christ recognized any connexion between His death and the exposure of the Holy of Holies; or indeed that they thought the rending of the veil worth

recording. That which to the disciples appeared extraordinary and of God, to those who repudiated their conclusions may have seemed simple and natural. At the time of the Death, possibly as part of the disturbance of which the darkness had been an omen, happened an earthquake, and one of the so-called apocryphal gospels, that known as the Gospel to the Hebrews, says that a lintel in the Temple was shattered by this earthquake, —it may have been the lintel to which were hung the curtains which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. There were two such curtains, very thick and heavy, and divided from each other by the length of the passage-way between the two chambers. The rending of the veil may have been caused by the fall of masonry. If so, the affair was not even remarkable; and coincidences are easily reasoned away. Indeed, it has been supposed, rather rashly perhaps, that the tradition of the veil given in the Synoptics arose from a confusion of the Hebrew words for "lintel" and "curtain." Nevertheless, whether it was the lintel or the curtain that gave way, or both, or whether or not the report itself was at fault, there is little doubt that the Evangelists intended to convey the impression that the rending of the veil and the earthquake itself

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were effects of the death of Christ, and not merely concomitants. As the Lord of glory went away, the very ground trembled and the mystery of the Temple was made known.

The Earthquake and the coming back of the dead.

Matt. xxvii.
51-53.

The disclosure of the Holy of Holies, however, was but one consequence among several. St. Matthew records an earthquake ; and besides it, as he goes on to say, "the rocks were rent ; and the tombs were opened ; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised ; and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many." The earthquake occasions no surprise. Violent storms, thick darkness, long-rolling thunder, and earthquakes more or less severe were common enough in Palestine to furnish the psalmists and prophets with appalling figures of the power and majesty of God. Amos and Zechariah abound in allusions to these phenomena, and to the catastrophes wrought by them ; while tradition told of the destruction of the cities of the plain, and of the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, King of Judah. Nor does the reader wonder that, at the trembling of the earth, the rocks were rent in that immediate neighbourhood, especially those along the valley of the Kedron, and that the sepulchres were opened

to the light of day. Such things were not uncommon; and portents of this kind were to be expected at the death of great men. But the reader has difficulty in getting at the meaning of the other phenomena.

By some scholars this part of the story is dismissed as utterly unhistorical, and as a probable interpolation,—for which the writer of Matthew is held entirely responsible. The word “saint” is used of believers in Christ frequently in the Epistles, but this is the only instance of such usage in the Gospels; and with this exception and one other in the same Gospel, the term “holy city,” meaning thereby Jerusalem, is employed in the New Testament exclusively by the writer of the Apocalypse. Both expressions have a suggestion of strangeness in this place; but not sufficient to be of much weight. Nor is there any indication that the passage was added to the text. The evidence for its genuineness is the same as for the rest of this Gospel. The writer of Matthew in setting it in his narrative does not indeed thereby confer verity upon the legend, but he certainly accepted it as true, and saw no reason why it should be set aside. The real objection does not lie in the direction of textual criticism, but against the remarkable statement that bodies were raised from the

The raising of the dead at this time regarded by some as idle legend.

Matt. iv. 5.

dead, and that they to whom they belonged appeared to many persons in Jerusalem.

An unsatisfactory effort to ignore the supernatural.

The difficulty cannot be explained away by making the record mean, that in the breaking of the rocks and the falling down of the sepulchres many bodies were exposed, and had to be lifted up out of the débris; and that these bodies, after the Sabbath was over, and therefore after His resurrection, were seen by many of the people of the holy city. Language could scarcely undergo more violent contortion. Nor is it satisfactory to say that the "appearances" were brought about by the imagination of those who had become absorbed in the events then taking place: in other words, that they were entirely subjective. At the same time, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the persons raised appeared as apparitions only to those who had, first, the predisposing faith for such visions: and in those days, and for ages before and since, he was indeed phenomenal who did not believe in the return of spirits; and, secondly, some interest in them, either as relatives or friends. These were they who told the story.

The literal interpretation has strong support and many advocates.

On the other hand, men of scholarship and repute, both of ancient and of modern times, at least equal to those who question or deny this tradition, accept the narrative as

historical, interpret it literally, and declare the event to have been supernatural and symbolic. It was to have been expected, they say, that such an event as the death of Christ would not only affect nature, as in the earthquake, and the Jewish economy, as in the rending of the veil, but would also have an influence upon the unseen world. The holy ones who came back from that other life were such as had had expectation or faith in Jesus the Messiah: people of the type of Anna, Simeon, Zacharias, and Elisabeth. In their resurrection at this time they became witnesses to the authority of the Risen Lord over death and the dead. Dean Alford, who finds no difficulty in the way of a literal interpretation, quotes Cornelius à Lapide favourably as holding that the graves were opened at the moment of Christ's death, but the bodies of the saints therein did not arise till He rose, and then, having appeared unto many in Jerusalem, at His ascension went up with Him into heaven.

It may be, however, that the expression "holy city" here refers not to the earthly Jerusalem, but to the city above, the heavenly Jerusalem. The belief that Christ descended into hell, and there preached to the souls in prison, was held widely and strongly in

Some have thought the event to belong to the other world.

Stromata, lib.
vi. cap. vi.

the early Church. As a result of His mission, it was supposed that the condition there of those who believed was changed. So Clement of Alexandria writes: "The Gospel says, 'that many bodies of those that slept arose,'—plainly as having been translated to a better state. There took place, then, a universal movement and translation through the economy of the Saviour." According to this theory we may understand that these saints who rose from the dead at the time of the Passion and appeared after the resurrection, anticipated the general resurrection in the last day, and entered heaven as an earnest and an illustration of the power and glory which shall be manifested when the archangel's trump shall call all the dead to the new life. If so, then, at this time there are in heaven, the holy city, other sons of earth besides Enoch and Elijah and our Blessed Lord, who have gone through all the changes which yet lie before the rest of mankind. This theory and other theories similar to it are beyond disproof; and the Evangelist may have had in mind an event which had taken place in the other world, but it is not easy to think so.

No conclusion can be reached altogether satisfactory. We may not be in the region

of the legendary if by legendary we mean the untrue or fanciful, but we are within that of the mysterious; and there we must wait till the guide comes. No use whatever is made of this incident by any other writer in the New Testament, though some scholars, such as Eusebius, have detected an allusion to it in the Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Magnesians, —“Even the prophets, being His disciples, § ix. were expecting Him as their teacher through the Spirit. And for this cause He whom they rightly awaited, when He came, raised them from the dead.” Bishop Pearson found a proof of the identity of the human body before death and after the resurrection, in that the saints rose again in the same bodies which were buried. But the same conclusion can be sufficiently maintained from our Lord’s experience. Practically no doctrine necessary to the Faith depends upon this tradition for support, and to all intents and purposes it matters little what interpretation or view is taken. Nothing would be gained by the solution of the problem, except the gratification of curiosity; and should the narrative be admitted unhistorical, and be ruled out of the sacred text, in no way or degree would such action endanger the facts of the Crucifixion and the death of our Lord.

Its solution at present impossible and of little consequence.

On the Creed,
p. 675.

The exclamation of the Centurion.

We can easier understand the effect which the death of Christ had upon the officer in charge of the soldiers who guarded the Cross. He stood by over against Him watching, and evidently thinking upon all that had happened. He had never seen or heard anything like this. It is not impossible that in after years he may have contributed to the story which has come down to us of the events of that great day. The Synoptics agree that when he beheld Jesus die, he glorified God and exclaimed, "Truly this man was a son of God," meaning thereby, as St. Luke puts it, and as a Roman could only have intended it, "a righteous man."

The Legend of Longinus.

This acknowledgment, striking and unexpected as it was, must not be taken to imply that the centurion was converted to Christ. He simply testifies his belief in the innocence of the Crucified Victim; and in so doing he expresses beforehand the opinion of the Gentile world. His conversion may have followed. Legend very early ran wild on that possibility. He was identified with the soldier who pierced the Saviour's side, and the name of Longinus was assigned him. It was said that after he had spoken in vindication of Christ, he placed his hands, stained with the sacred blood, before his eyes, and immediately

spiritual sight came to him. He sought the Apostles, and received baptism. After labouring at Cæsarea in the propagation of the Faith, for twenty-eight years, he was put to death there as a martyr. The Roman Church commemorates him on March 15, and the Greek Church on October 16. But on every point connected with him, his relics no less than his story, there is the greatest uncertainty. Art, however, has made him a favourite and conspicuous figure, especially in ancient pictures of the Crucifixion.

It was the eve of the Sabbath, and that Sabbath was a great day. "The Jews therefore," says St. John, who alone tells this incident, "because it was the Preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath (for the day of that sabbath was a high day), asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him: but when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and straightway there came out blood and water. And he that hath seen

Having done the deed of shame, the Jews now prepare to keep the Sabbath.

John xix. 31-37.

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hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe. For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."

The effusion
of blood and
water.

Lib. ii. cap.
xxxvi.

John xix. 35.

1 John v. 6, 8.

So *e.g.*, David
Smith, quoting
Dr. Stroud's
well-known
treatise on

Much has been said about the "blood and water." The effect of the spear-thrust into the side was unusual. Origen, in his answer to Celsus, says: "In other dead bodies the blood congeals, and pure water does not flow forth; but the miraculous feature in the case of the dead body of Jesus was, that around the dead body blood and water flowed forth from the side." St. John does not ascribe the flowing of the blood and water to a miracle, but apparently he recognizes the physical difficulty, for he immediately proceeds to enforce his record by an earnest asseveration. The incident impressed him to the last: "This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood"; "there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one." Medical science is said to have solved the problem. According to one hypothesis, the immediate condition which brought on

our Lord's death was a rupture or bursting of the heart: if so, to use the language of the authorities, the thrust of the spear set free the extravasated blood which had gathered in the sac of the pericardium. The fluid consisted of red clots and watery serum. But Bishop Westcott held that this explanation is both inadequate and inconsistent with the facts; and Dean Alford also reminds us that the medical opinions on this point are very various, and by no means satisfactory. The latter commentator believed that the circumstance was a miraculous sign referring to the work of the Redeemer, and showing Him to be more than mortal. The patristic interpretations of the text are many and fanciful, and without an exception inconclusive. Perhaps, after all, the Evangelist did not intend to draw attention so much to the running out of the water and blood, as to the fact that Jesus was really dead. The thrust of the spear was proof of this; and St. John saw the thrust, which if death had not already taken place would have caused it, and he knew beyond all dispute that the Master was dead. No evidence more was needed to refute the theory which taught the unreality of Christ's physical nature and acts. And yet, on the other hand, as we have before pointed

the subject; and see *Expositor*, series viii, vol. ii. p. 310, for an article confirming this opinion by Sir A. R. Simpson, M.D. His uncle, Sir James Y. Simpson, celebrated for his discoveries in anæsthetics, held the same opinion (see Appendix to Hanna's *Last Days of our Lord's Passion*). In the Speaker's Commentary, New Test., should be read, the remarks by Dr. Samuel Houghton (iv. 349); the patristic interpretations (ii. 284); and Bp. Westcott's adverse conclusion (ii. 279).

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out, His death must not be made to mean or imply that it was in any sense different from the death of all men. "Although he was more than man, yet he died no more than man can die."

Pearson *On the Creed*, p. 384.

Joseph of Arimathea makes known his faith in Jesus of Nazareth.

All the Evangelists record the story of the burial.

When the evening had come, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, of honourable estate, and described by the Evangelists as good, righteous, and looking for the kingdom of God, and a member of the Sanhedrin, went to Pilate, and begged that he might take away the body of Jesus. It may have been that the disciples were unprepared to arrange for the proper interment of their Master; possibly they had not recovered sufficiently from their fright to undertake a service so distinctly sympathetic and friendly. Possibly, too, they had not looked for any exception to the Roman rule which permitted neither sepulture nor mourning for those who had died by crucifixion. Joseph was at heart a disciple, "secretly for fear of the Jews," and he had not consented to the action of the Council—either absenting himself from its meeting, or refraining from giving a vote. Perhaps he had witnessed the crucifixion; at all events, courage had come to him, timidity passed away, and, according to St. Mark, he went in boldly to the governor. The acknowledg-

Luke xxiii. 51.

ment of Jesus by a member of the Sanhedrin which had condemned Him was not only significant, but led to a fulfilment of prophecy, which, however, was not noted by any writer for several generations: "They made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." These particulars the Evangelists do not touch. They seem to have been desirous of emphasizing more than aught else the fact of sepulture: He was buried, publicly and notably, by a man well known in the community, whose reputation put beyond all question any suspicion of unreality or collusion.

Isa. liii. 9.

The governor marvelled if Jesus were already dead, but learning the fact from the centurion, and having no wish to add indignity to One who he believed had been innocent of the charges brought against Him, he granted the corpse to Joseph. All effort at secrecy was now thrown aside. Nicodemus, he who at the first came to Jesus by night, now encouraged by Joseph's example, joined himself to him, and these two masters in Israel, members of the Sanhedrin, took down the body of Jesus, and as far as time would permit prepared it for burial. Perhaps such care had never before been taken over one who had died on the accursed tree. When, according to the custom of the Jews, they had

The entombment.

bound the body in linen cloths, furnished by Joseph, within which were the myrrh, aloes, and other spices brought by Nicodemus, they carried it to a garden close by belonging to Joseph, and there, in a new tomb wherein never man had yet lain, they laid the body of the Great Teacher. Then Joseph rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and he and Nicodemus departed. Mary Magdalene and other women had followed to the tomb, and standing by saw what was done, and how the body was laid. Then they, too, went away : for the shadows were deepening fast. Evidently the Sabbath was too close at hand to allow the body to be taken farther, and the tomb was used as a temporary receptacle. On the day after the Sabbath, the women would come with spices and ointments, and finish the preparations for burial, and the body would be carried to its last resting place. Later, to be prepared against any possible imposition, came some priests and Pharisees with a guard which Pilate had given them, and they sealed the stone, set the watch, and went back to the city.

" There was
a great calm."

The Great Sabbath had begun. The sun which had witnessed one of man's cruellest deeds had gone beyond the western mists. All work had ceased ; even that of the con-

spirator. Annas and Caiaphas, priests and teachers, Pilate, and the mob that clamoured for Bar-abbas, they who loved and they who hated the Victim of Calvary, could rest in peace. The noise of Jerusalem was hushed. On the mountains round about the city, the village of Bethany, the olive-trees of Gethsemane, and the mound of Golgotha, fell the light of the paschal moon. But for the step of the sentinel to and fro in the garden of the tomb, all was still.

Jesus was dead !

Imagination has been industrious over everything, and almost everybody, concerned in the Crucifixion of our Blessed Lord. Unable to satisfy itself otherwise, curiosity fell from faith into credulity, and accepted as facts legends and rumours which sprang up and multiplied, no one knows how. The more men looked from the spiritual to the material, and endeavoured to find the substance in the accidents, the weaker became the critical faculty, by which we understand the desire for truth and the skill to discern truth, and the more unrestrained the devices and inventions. Of course such would not have happened had there been no interest in the subject ; indeed, at times

The luxuriance
of legends.

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it seems as if the interest had developed into fascination, and the fascination for the things associated with Calvary had given to dreams a diligence and to fancy a capacity far from ordinary. Thus it was learned that the name of the penitent thief was Dismas, or according to one authority Titus, and that while belonging to a band of robbers, he showed kindness to our Lord when in His infancy He was being taken down into Egypt. Afterwards Dismas kept an inn, and made attacks on the rich, sparing the poverty-stricken, for obvious reasons ; but, in spite of virtues such as burying the bodies of the poor, at last he robbed the Temple and maltreated the daughter of Caiaphas, thus ensuring his own death. So it was told that, after the Centurion had made his report to Pilate of the death of Christ, the procurator and his wife were exceedingly grieved, and neither ate nor drank that day. The woman healed of the issue of blood by touching the edge of Christ's robe is the same Veronica who gave Him her handkerchief, as He was on the way to Calvary. Joseph of Arimathea passed through many vicissitudes before he reached Britain, and planted the thorn at Glastonbury. On the return from the entombment, he was seized by the Jews, and thrust into durance with the threat that

when the Sabbath was over his flesh should be given to the fowls of the air. He escaped so terrible a fate, as did David, for he himself, in his "Narrative," records: "And now, on the evening of the first of the week, at the fifth hour of the night, Jesus comes to me in the prison, along with the robber who had been crucified with Him on the right, whom He sent into paradise. And there was a great light in the building. And the house was hung i.e. lifted up. up by the four corners, and the place was opened, and I came out. Then I first recognized Jesus, and again the robber, bringing a letter to Jesus. And as we were going into Galilee, there shone a great light, which the creation did not produce. And there was also with the robber a great fragrance out of paradise." In the "Gospel of Nicodemus," after describing his deliverance from prison, Joseph is made to say: "I knew that it was Jesus. And he took hold of me with his hand, and put me in the midst of my house though the gates were shut, and put me in my bed, and said to me: Peace to thee! And he kissed me, and said to me: For forty days go not out of thy house; for, lo, I go to my brethren into Galilee."

The *Book of the Golden Legend* is not sure that Adam was buried in the place where The wood of the Cross.

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Christ died, but earlier authorities had little doubt on that point, and art frequently depicts lying at the foot of the cross the skull of the man by whom sin came into the world. The wood of the cross, which some said was oak, some pine, and others of four different kinds, was fancifully traced back to a tree which sprang from one of three kernels of the tree of mercy, procured by Seth from an angel, and laid under the tongue of Adam when he buried him; though other authorities affirmed that it was taken from a branch of the tree whence came the forbidden fruit, and which was planted by Seth on his father's grave. The history of this tree is given by mediæval writers at length and with solemnity.

The Invention
of the Cross.

About the year 350, St. Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of the wood of the true cross, "which," he says, "is to be seen among us at the present day," and he states that particles of the "salvation-bringing wood" were already dispersed throughout the world. In a sermon, preached about 395, by St Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, it is said that St Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, inspired by the Holy Ghost, dug the soil of Calvary, and found therein three crosses, one of which she knew to be the cross of Christ by the title upon it. This was about the year 326. Later

it was reported that the identification had been made sure either by laying upon each of the crosses, or presenting each cross to, a sick woman and a dead man. When their bodies touched the true cross, the former was restored to health and the latter to life. By the eighth century the finding of the cross was generally commemorated on May 3; and the day is still marked in the calendar of the Church of England. Fragments of the cross, small as a pin's head, are far from uncommon.

At the same time, it is alleged, the nails were found; and either the original nails, or copies of them which in time came to be thought originals, are preserved in at least twenty-five places on the Continent. The seamless robe is at Treves. The napkin with which Veronica is said to have wiped the face of Christ, and on which was left the impress of His face, is kept in St Peter's, at Rome; as is also the head of the lance with which the soldier pierced His side. The sponge used in cleansing our Lord's body when it was taken down from the cross was found at Mantua. Even the cloths in which His body was wrapped for burial are said to be at Besançon and Turin.

Some other
relics.

Needless to say, these "relics" are mendacious fabrications, beyond all peradventure, and, though some may be of considerable

How the
desire for
relics came to
be gratified.

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antiquity, age is no evidence in their favour. Nor can it be taken for granted that they were provided for the people, not as veritable remains but as representing those remains : in other words, as articles to be taken for the real things used at Calvary, much as idols were intended to stand for some god. There is no intimation of any such subtilty. At the same time, it should be remembered that they were invented chiefly, perhaps entirely, to satisfy a demand. That demand came from one of the deepest rooted feelings in the human heart, common in these days as in former ages. Had the people not loved Christ, and believed in His power to make holy and helpful everything associated with Him, and, on the other hand, as we suggested just now, had they not passed from the spiritual idea of religion to a physical and material conception, there had been no relics. Not that the relics were wilfully and determinedly designed to supply the want. The eagerness to find things that belong to Christ, especially in the supreme crisis of His life, led the people to interpret coincidences, to rush to conclusions, and to accept chances. He had died upon a cross : therefore, if rumour said that a cross had been discovered in the soil of the mound where He was crucified, the rumour was held to be more

likely true than false. Very soon the possibility of its being false would be forgotten. Where everybody wanted to believe the rumour, every difficulty in the way of its acceptance disappeared, and enquiry seemed unnecessary. Constant repetition would rub off the edge of doubt. To be sure, had a stronger spirituality prevailed, the desire for "relics" had been less vigorous. Men would have found that the grace and glory of Christ lie not in the material cross or in the physical nature, but in what these stand for and what they enable Christ to do. But the ages when these discoveries were made were not spiritual; any more than it can be said that the emotion is spiritual which prompts us to preserve things associated with the body of one whom we have loved and who has gone from us. The latter is indeed a natural feeling, and is not to be despised; but it is not the same as that feeling which leads us to remember and to imitate the virtues, gracious habits, and noble opinions of people who have helped us in life.

Still, though a misapprehension of Christ, these "findings" were a tribute to His memory. They showed how deeply He interested the people. Even though, as time went on, this desire for things associated in this way with Him, led to abuses which really dishonoured

And yet the "relics" expressed a recognition of Christ.

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Him in that veneration was paid to them and virtues ascribed to them alien to the spirit of His teaching, yet within the movement to these ills was a decisive faith in Him, and a recognition of His supreme position both in the affections of the individual and in the esteem of the world. How the fall came from the higher spiritual apprehension of Christ which characterized the primitive ages of Christianity need not concern us now, but, granting the fall, it does not mean that the fall involved more than a change of thought concerning Christ, and not a change of faith in Him or of love for Him.

The Holy Communion instituted to keep perpetually in mind the Sacrifice of Christ.

The rite by which the Church should keep in mind the Death of our Lord was ordained by that Lord Himself. In its appointment as the highest act of worship, it was intended by Him to set forth the paramount importance of His Sacrifice. In that fateful night in which He was betrayed, He had taken of the bread and wine of the Passover, and, pronouncing the elements upon which He laid His hand to be His body and blood, consecrated them as the principal means of conveying grace and effecting incorporation. He gave them to His disciples. He bade them to consecrate in like manner and in like material, and impart to others the same means, in memory or in com-

memoration of Him. No sooner was He taken from them into heaven, and the Church of God had set out on its pilgrimage through the ages, than the "breaking of bread" became the chief Christian service. And so from then till now. It is the sacrament or ordinance that not only maintains the union of the individual Christian with Christ, but also stretches across the expanse of time that lies between Calvary and the Second Advent. Thus St. Paul declares, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi. 26.

In the institution of this Sacrament our Blessed Lord gave to an ancient theory and observance a new meaning. The Passover itself seems to have been an Israelitish adaptation of a feast which had existed from a remote antiquity. The story of Abel illustrates the sacrifice of the firstlings of the flock, in grateful acknowledgment that fruitfulness comes from God. In those distant ages man regarded his firstborn son as his choicest sacrifice both of thanksgiving and of propitiation; and though he came to substitute a lamb for his child, the theory still held that the firstborn belonged peculiarly to God. About the time of the spring equinox the feast was held and the sacrifice made. This was the feast that Moses besought Pharaoh to allow the children

The Holy Communion
an ancient rite
with a new
meaning.

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of Israel to celebrate in the wilderness ; and the punishment meted out to the Egyptians for the king's refusal was the death of Egypt's firstborn,—a proof that though the firstborn belonged to the gods of Egypt, these gods could not save them. The feast, however, was held, in the land of Goshen, and became the occasion of the Exodus, and afterwards the celebration of the Exodus. In the Levitical ritual rules were laid down for the redemption of the first-born ; and though it may have happened that the sacrificial theory of the lamb became less distinct in the commemorative character of the Passover feast, yet the lamb came to be taken as the symbol of Him who should stand in the stead of His brethren, and, as the First-born, should be sacrificed for them. No longer is the Passover to remind Israel only of a deliverance from Egypt, but also, and much more, to tell all mankind of release from a bondage of which that of Egypt was only a figure.

True religion has come down through all the generations, unbroken, though not unchanged, as a river flows from the mountains to the sea.

In this, and in much else, may be seen the survival of certain principles and customs through the ages. It is sometimes said that Christ introduced a new religion, with new sacraments, creeds, and doctrines. Such was not the idea of early Christianity. It regarded itself as the fulfilment of the ancient ideas and habits ; the explanation of the laws

and rites observed especially in Israel, but also by other God-seeking peoples; the development and illumination of truths which to the ancients had been precious as seeds of life, though vague as the nebulæ of the heavens. Just as Christ brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel, so did Christianity take over bodily the Old Testament, call itself the new Israel, apply to itself in a spiritual sense the promises made to ancient Israel in a material and temporal sense, and consider itself as continuing the work once carried on by the prophets, and earlier by Moses himself. There was no breaking away from the religion taught by the fathers. The Church after the coming of Christ was one with the Church before that coming—greater indeed, with new insight into old truths, with fresh meanings to old ceremonies, but without disruption. So the Passover feast, without losing its identity, subordinately as the commemoration of the deliverance of Israel out of bondage, and primarily as the sacrifice of the firstborn, changes into the Lord's Supper, there constantly to remind us that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

See, e.g.,
Harnack's
"Presupposi-
tions"
in his *History
of Dogma*.

This continuity of the Church of God through the ages should not be lost sight of.

Christianity no
new thing.

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Christianity was the natural and normal product of the Judaism and Mosaism of the Old Testament. In it religion has passed from pupilage and youth into manhood—undoubtedly now to put away many “childish things,” which at one time had their purpose and were needful, but not to destroy its own identity. Christ was a Son of His people, a Reformer, a Revealer, and an Interpreter ; but not the Founder of a new cult or religion. He would indeed change the conception of the Old Testament prevailing in His day, because that conception failed to set forth adequately the truth of the ancient writings ; but He would not change or abolish the writings themselves. He would teach men how they should be read. In Him types would be fulfilled, and ceremonies show forth their purpose. Changes would come into Christianity when Christianity should come into close contact with the great religious systems outside of Judaism, but these changes, or even accretions as it might happen, would not effect the continuity of the essence or central and dominant idea of Christianity.

The sacramental theory not peculiar to Christianity.

But should it be, as some have supposed, that our Blessed Lord in the institution of the Holy Communion incorporated into that institution ideas drawn from sources which,

while not entirely absent from Judaism, had a more vigorous life in other religions—which there is not the slightest evidence—it would not touch the purpose He had in mind, or the authority and significance of His act. It is true that from remote ages man held the notion that in some way or other the act of eating and drinking, not necessarily the actual flesh and blood, but that which stood for the flesh and blood, of a deity, a warrior, a leader, would impart to him the virtues which he admired or feared in such superior being. This idea, however, need not have been imparted by one race or religion to another. It is sufficiently natural to have been common and independent in origin and development among many peoples. The worshippers of animal totems, at their great festivals, consumed the flesh of their totem, and thus partook of its life; so, among a much more advanced and cultured race, in the Eleusinian mysteries, the worshippers of Demeter, the corn-goddess, ate of a cake made of the meal of wheat and water, which they regarded as the body of their deity. In the latter case, and probably in the former, this participation, in which the whole body of worshippers joined, was supposed not only to renew the bond between

Robertson
Smith's
*Religion of the
Semites*, pp.
295, 405.

See, e.g.,
Jevons' *Intro-
duction to the
History of
Religion*,
chap. xxiv.

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the deity and his people, but also to unite the worshippers one to another in a mystic fellowship. Similar ideas and practices prevailed in most parts of the world. If in the Holy Communion the like purpose exists, rather than indicating borrowing from heathen or Pagan cults, it means that Christ takes hold of a wide-spread theory, perhaps a natural instinct, and gives to it a higher and holier significance, and consecrates it to a nobler use.

The sacramental idea in Holy Communion holds beside the commemorative purpose.

Whatever other ideas have been brought into the doctrine of the Holy Communion, it is next to certain that its first purpose was to commemorate the Divine Sacrifice which is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. It came soon to be spoken of as a sacrifice, but not in the sense of a repetition of the Sacrifice offered once and for ever at Calvary. Thanksgiving was the keynote of the feast, expressed in the prayers and praises then presented, rather than in the breaking of the bread. But the latter conception soon made itself known,—if, indeed, it was not present from the first. More and more the thought of Christendom turned to the elements used in this Sacrament. They became not merely outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, but means and instruments by

which that inward and spiritual grace is conveyed to the believer. The memorial purpose of the Holy Eucharist has never been forgotten, but it has not been brought out as distinctly and positively as the sacramental idea of feeding upon the Body and the Blood of Christ ; such feeding, precisely as in primitive ages, that the recipient may partake of the nature and share in the life of the one worshipped and honoured.

We venture to suppose that this secondary consideration, as we may call it, was at the beginning in the conception of this Blessed Sacrament. Yet the early Christians probably had no *doctrine* on the subject. They acquiesced in a practice common and well understood. They simply did what their Lord commanded, without enquiring curiously into all that He meant, or could be conjectured to mean. But enquiry was inevitable, and definition unavoidable. St. Paul set forth the ancient theory of participation by a physical act in the spiritual qualities of Deity: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?" The Revised Version, in the margin, translates "communion of" by the words "participation in"; as did Dean

St. Paul
follows the
ancient theory.

1 Cor. x. 16.

e.g. In the
Speaker's
Commentary.

Alford. Moreover, the Dean declares that "the strong literal sense must here be held fast, as constituting the very kernel of the Apostle's argument." The translation has been disputed, but practically the same conclusion is reached. No one doubts that St. Paul here regards the Holy Communion as the instrumental cause of the believer's union with Christ. St. Paul, indeed, proceeds to show that this principle was not new, but obtained in Judaism: "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" For this same reason the Apostle forbids Christians to partake of sacrifices which have been offered unto heathen deities.

One natural
result of the
importance of
the Sacrament
has been
controversy.

Concerning no other rite or doctrine belonging to Christianity has there been more dispute: for there is no other rite, and possibly no other doctrine, of such dignity and consequence. This dispute has gathered principally, but not entirely, around the question of the effect of the consecration upon the elements consecrated, and of the purpose of that consecration; and so grave is the controversy, and so far-reaching its results, that a correct opinion on these points is held to be necessary by the several disputants, if not to salvation, at least to a profitable use of the

Sacrament,—each disputant naturally holding his own opinion to be the correct one. Thus according to the Roman doctrine the elements are changed by consecration substantially into the literal, physical, and proper Body and Blood of Christ; so that in and under the forms of bread and wine the communicant receives actually and bodily his Lord and Saviour. The Lutheran view repudiates the change of substance, but maintains that the same effects are produced in the participant as though the change had been effected. The Calvinistic theory teaches that Christ is present in the consecrated elements dynamically, as, for instance, the sun, though actually in the heavens, may be said to be present in the light and heat which it imparts to the earth. The Zwinglian conclusion supposes that the elements by consecration are given a higher dignity, as a wreath of flowers may differ in association from other wreaths, say, by being set upon the brow of a bride; but that no virtue or change of nature is imparted to them. They represent the body and blood of Christ, but they do not convey that body and blood. The adherents of these several views condemn all other views as vigorously as they defend their own; and each is apt to consider himself as the only

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one receiving real benefit from the Blessed Sacrament.

Profitable communion, however, does not depend upon correct opinions.

It may be doubted if, outside of theological circles, the communicant has any apprehension of the subject approaching clearness. He certainly could not define, and would not seek to define, the nature of the Divine Presence, or state in precise terms the purpose and effect of consecration; any more than the untaught man, though using and enjoying life, could tell the mystery of life. But if a holy and vigorous spiritual life be the outcome of an honest participation of the Holy Communion, and that ordinance be intended to impress upon the individual the fact and meaning of the Death of Christ, then the secret of power does not lie in the view taken of the presence of Christ. For no one can fairly question that these results are common among the adherents of all the views just referred to. That joy and peace in the Holy Ghost, that chastened conversation, exalted trust in Jesus as the Redeemer, that amended life, and charity to one's neighbours, come to all alike who participate in the Lord's Supper, irrespective of doctrines held, if there be faith, honesty of purpose, and capacity for grace. Nor does the extent, whether great or small, of ritual observance affect the spiritual results.

There are those who have made the service of Holy Communion an elaborate presentation of the tragedy of Calvary, and by the free use of art and ceremony have endeavoured not only to do honour to Him who died on the cross, but also to draw out the devotion and concentrate the attention of the worshippers. They have emphasized the mystery, developed the lore of symbols, and enlivened æstheticism. And not without beneficial result. But even they, with all this anxious care, do not in good works, or in love for God and appreciation of the Sacrifice of Christ, excel others to whom such elaboration is unknown, or if known is too bewildering to become an adequate expression of their belief.

Nor does grace depend upon spiritual development.

It is very likely that a given doctrine and a given ritual help those who adopt them, when other doctrines and rituals would fail utterly : that is to say, for example, a communicant might receive no comfort or strength at an altar where the Anglican Use prevailed, and yet would obtain great benefit where a rite widely varying therefrom was observed. And this may justify the variety of opinions and ceremonies. Nevertheless individual tastes and proclivities do not solve the problem. There must be some power behind all this that brings about the effects we observe alike

Idiosyncrasies have to be taken into account.

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in all bodies of Christian people. This is even more evident if we consider the beautiful lives and generous deeds, combined with the fullest appreciation of the work and merits of Jesus Christ, which appear in societies which observe no ceremonial celebration of Holy Communion whatever. It is easy to say that such organizations are defective: probably they are, in that they set aside the use of outward and visible signs as means of grace, and thereby come perilously near trespassing against the command of Christ. But the fruits of the Spirit are as often and as clearly manifested in the members of such societies as in those who differ from them. Nor is it reasonable to speak of reverence as belonging exclusively to that which we ourselves practise or with which we ourselves are familiar; or to conclude that violations of what we consider good taste or proper decorum necessarily mean irreverence. This does not imply, however, that there is any excuse for careless, slovenly, or uncleanly habits either in Divine worship or elsewhere. The Apostolical injunction holds good: Let everything be done decently and in order.

Use of symbolism in olden time.

Whatever may have followed the upheaval and disturbance of religious life in the sixteenth century, there is little doubt that in the

primitive ages, and no doubt at all that in the Middle Ages, places of Christian worship were so arranged that the places themselves should testify to the pre-eminence of the Divine Sacrifice. All that could be done was done to keep Calvary constantly in mind. The Altar, or the Lord's Table as some called it, or God's Board as others called it, occupied the chief position in a building devoted to the service of God. Near it, perhaps upon it, was set the Cross, a symbol not only of the Christian faith, but also of the means whereby salvation came to man. Later, the building itself was fashioned in the shape of a cross, sometimes with the eastern part, in which the altar stood, deflected towards the right to represent the drooping head of Christ when the end had come. The most sacred part of the building was this in which the Sacrifice was commemorated. Here was the centre, the converging point, of worship, faith, and symbolism. And none can doubt that all this helped to perpetuate the memory and to exalt the significance of Christ's death. In days when few could read the written or printed book, all could discern the meaning of the story as it was told by the painter, the builder, and the sculptor. No one was allowed to forget what these things stood for; and no

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one, without misunderstanding human nature, will fail to recognize their usefulness.

The effect
desired not
dependent
upon art.

But that they were only means to an end, and not themselves the end, would have been admitted readily enough by those who designed them, and is apparent when we remember that in very early times and in times since the passing of mediævalism, and in lands far away from Europe and European conditions, men have reached that end by other means. The minster, abounding in the triumphs and glories of art and in hallowed associations, may indeed fulfil its purpose of leading the world to a recognition of the work of Christ; but there are other ways, than any the minster may possess, to bring about the same effect. On hillside and in forest glade, on the great waters and in the depths of the wilderness, where there was no building, and none of the accessories of worship, people have been guided to the Cross of Jesus, and led to see in His death the source and assurance of their life.

It is not the
means, or the
use of any
special means,
that necessarily
brings grace.

While grateful, therefore, to Almighty God for all that has done anything to help man Christward, we feel that no one way is exclusively sure in its purpose. Neither the building nor the rites celebrated therein, display they ever so plainly the fact of Calvary, and neither

the ceremony nor the doctrine, be they ever so true and beautiful, are more than helps. The source of power lies not within them. Sometimes the power operates independently of them. May it not be that the strengthening and sanctifying force is brought into action by the ardent desire and earnest effort of the individual to fulfil his Master's command, and to concentrate his thought and affection upon the salvation which at Calvary his Master wrought for him? In bringing himself with all his powers of soul and mind to the contemplation of Christ, setting himself as it were within the light of the Cross, there comes to him grace which cannot but develop the best of his abilities, whether spiritual, intellectual, or even physical. This is to attain to that salvation which Christ procured for man by His sacrifice. Some may be able thus to give up themselves more readily and more completely than others, just as some have stronger minds, or more disciplined minds than others. But it does not appear that the extent of the apprehension denotes the effect of the grace. There may be thorough understanding and vigorous imagination, and yet little blessing. On the contrary, there may be much confusion and ignorance concerning the truths and doctrines involved in the Sacrifice of

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Christ, and yet abundant joy and service. In the latter case there may be a sincerity and an earnestness which the former lacked, and without which no one can receive blessing and grace.

While grace is of God, we ourselves must give the welcome.

If this be so, then it is not the opinions we entertain of the nature of Holy Communion, or the ceremonies we observe, or the buildings we frequent, which enable us to proclaim the Lord's death, and to receive the virtues which flow therefrom. Rather than in these outward things, the power is within ourselves—bringing ourselves into contact with Christ, by the memory and appreciation of His sufferings for us. Whether this power originates with us or is imparted to us does not affect the fact. The outward may help us, or not, according to our nature and habits; but if there is no determination on our part to fasten ourselves upon the truth of Calvary, nothing can be of use.

Yet we may not despise either ceremonies or knowledge.

But while we affirm that the redemption which Christ by His sacrifice and in His mercy gives to the individual does not depend upon the ceremony used or the knowledge acquired, we must not conclude that either ceremony or knowledge is to be disregarded. There is a virtue in acts of devotion, in rites, in art, and in music, though the virtue is not

infallibly efficacious, and we may fail to appreciate it, as much perhaps from temperament as from anything else; and knowledge may bring gladness and satisfaction, a wider vision and clearer insight. There is no grace in ignorance, though the ignorant man may receive grace in measure as abundant as the man of knowledge; but the grace has been given, not because of his ignorance, but because of other qualities which made the reception of grace possible. Let the man of knowledge have these same qualities, and the grace imparted will be still more productive both of joy and of good works.

And here it is necessary to recall the end and purpose of the Holy Communion. Christ ordained it for the continual remembrance of the Sacrifice of His Death, and of the benefits which we receive thereby. Except as it enables us to keep that fact in mind, and to bring us to appreciate and to appropriate what He did by dying for us, the Holy Communion is of no use. From His command, "Do this in remembrance of Me," we learn that He desires the mind to be directed in this Sacrament solely and entirely to Him. The commemoration is only of Him. We may not divert our attention from Him, even though it be to things holy and desirable. And the

The state of mind and feeling called for in the Holy Communion.

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memory is to concern itself with the supreme act in His life, namely His Death. We are to think only of the Passion ; to recall the events which befell Him from Gethsemane to Calvary, the manner in which He carried His griefs and sorrows, the love which led Him to be willing to suffer, and the mastery with which He resisted every temptation, and filled out His purpose of dying unto sin. The more we turn from this contemplation of the Sacrifice, and dwell upon the means whereby we may attain that contemplation, or any other blessing we desire, the less the benefit of the Sacrament. To him whose soul is set on Christ at Calvary, it matters little what changes have been wrought in these elements, so long as they further him in his longing to get nearer to his Crucified Redeemer. It will not disquiet him whether these elements really are, or only represent, the Body and Blood of his Lord ; or whether the Body thought of is the Body tortured and humiliated, or the Body risen from the dead and glorified in heaven. Such may be curious questions, but they have little importance to him whose whole being is absorbed in the thought of Jesus suffering and dying for the salvation of men, and securing that salvation. He forgets all else, even himself, and the blessings which may come to

him, and in entire devotion adores, loves, and serves the Divine Redeemer.

But one result is likely to follow from such a remembrance. Christ verily becomes the sustenance of the soul, after the manner that the food whence the material elements of the Sacrament are taken furnishes nourishment for the body. As water to the thirsty land, the means whereby it is conveyed being comparatively of slight moment, so Christ enters into the mind and heart of those thus diligently seeking Him. His presence immediately manifests itself; and in nothing more clearly than in making the believer more like Himself in the power of sacrifice and unselfishness. When the spirit of sacrifice enters in, the spirit of selfishness goes out. He who reaches Calvary finds there a cross for himself, and happy is he if he accepts it as God's gift.

The effect of spiritual and mental concentration.

The Holy Communion, however, was ordained by Christ for more purposes than to convey benefits to the faithful recipient. The world itself in that rite should have a perpetual witness and reminder of the Death at Calvary. If historical evidence of that event be required, other than that afforded in the books of the New Testament, it may be had in the institution and observance of this

The Memorial Offering of the Sacrifice before the World;

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Sacrament. Its institution can be accounted for only by some event intended to be commemorated, and its history shows what the event was. Through the many centuries, day by day, the Church has proclaimed the fact upon which rest the truth of Christ and the salvation of the world. Probably there has never been a moment in time since the first celebration in the Upper Room at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, and certainly not since the Cross of Christ was carried out into the world, when the memorial of the Great Sacrifice has not been in process of presentation. The witness is ever going on: as well in lonely mission chapels as in glorious cathedrals and churches. Jesus died! No other fact of history is so perpetually before us. It is never permitted to pass out of sight. By this service the Church is continually showing forth the Lord's death till He comes.

and before
God.

Nor is this memorial of Calvary without reference to God Himself. Not that the Father needs to be reminded of the Sacrifice made by the Son; but the rite is an acknowledgment on man's part of his grateful recognition and glad acceptance of the benefits procured by the Sacrifice. In this act the Church expressed her adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, and declares that upon the

meritorious work of Christ she rests her hope for the salvation of the world and her plea for mercy, holiness, and peace. With the blood of His Passion she comes into the presence of the Almighty, and claims it to be the justification of her prayers and service. To God and to angels she proclaims her trust in that blood. Only by the death of her Lord may man be freed from sin and brought into light and joy. She does not "offer" the Body and Blood of Christ to God as a propitiatory sacrifice: first, because such would imply either a defect in the Sacrifice at Calvary or the need of its repetition, contrary to the declaration of Holy Writ that Christ "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever," and that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are being sanctified"; and secondly, because the command "Do this" can only by a disingenuous strain of language, and by no possible construction of the words used by Christ, be made to mean "Offer this." Besides, it is expressly said that "He offered up himself." The act could be done by no one else; and it could be done but once,—“He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever [*i.e.* to last for ever], sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth [because his work was done] expecting till his enemies be made the footstool

Heb. x. 12, 14.

Observe the differences between *ποιεῖν* and *θύειν*.

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of his feet." Nor in any sense may it be assumed that the priest officiating in this service of Holy Communion stands in the place of Christ as mediating or interceding between God and man. Such an assumption would be a usurpation of functions peculiar to the Son of God, complete and all-efficient in Him, and at no time committed to man. Whatever may be the truth in Apostolical Succession, it is certain that Christ has no successors in His work at Calvary. But it is possible that the thankful remembrance in Holy Communion of the Sacrifice of our Divine Redeemer, and the devotion of ourselves to Him in consequence of that Sacrifice, may be acceptable to God, and may procure from Him favours and blessings. For the sake of the Crucified One and in response to our memorial of Him, evil may be averted and good bestowed. Thus it is that in the Eucharistic feast, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of His tender mercy He gave His only Son to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption. And thus it is that the breaking of the bread and the voice of praise never cease.

On the subject
of the Holy
Communion,
see especially
*The Body of
Christ*,
by Bp. Gore.

The date of the Apocalypse of St. John

is undetermined, and disagreement exists, or did for some centuries exist, concerning its right to a place in the canon of Sacred Scripture. Even greater uncertainty prevails, and has prevailed from the first, of its purpose and interpretation. But accepting the book simply as an unauthoritative production of early post-apostolic date, perhaps compiled from more sources than one, yet we find in it presentations of the Sacrifice of Christ which are priceless, if for no other quality, as witnesses of the faith concerning Him held at that time. Set aside the nature of the visions, whether they are prophetic of days yet to come or descriptive of events gone by, and we may affirm that the writer or writers of those visions expressed opinions and delineated scenes not opposed to the thought of the age. Should it be said that the book is nothing but a dream, yet even dreams are not seriously given to the world without some verisimilitude, some appearance of truth, which makes them at least readable. They correspond with the times. It is next to certain that in these days a *Faerie Queene* or a *Pilgrim's Progress* could not be written; changes have happened not only in manners, but much more in thought, feeling, and opinion; and, true as those works may have

The witness of
the Apocalypse
to the Sacrifice
of Christ.

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been as reflections and presentations of the life and habits of the respective decades in which they were composed, they can scarcely be said to set forth the spirit of any other generation. A book is written for its own age, and the author is necessarily imbued with the ideas of that age. So, all controversy aside, the Book of Revelation may be taken as evidence of what some Christian people thought at the time it was composed of Him who died on Calvary ; and it would be difficult to show that their thoughts and ideas ran contrary to the thoughts and ideas common in Christian society.

The promise of Christ in this Book.

As Dante early in his journey had for his guide Virgil, and later Beatrice, so by an angel sent by Jesus Christ, the writer of the Book of Revelation is led through regions of the other world, and is shown the things which must shortly come to pass. This angel-guide is at times so confused with Christ Himself that he may be spoken of as Christ's own angel-spirit ; so that the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants, may be said to have been given to St. John the Divine by Christ Himself, sometimes immediately, and sometimes by an angel closely identified with Himself. Throughout the book, next to God Himself,

Jesus, the faithful witness and the firstborn of the dead, is the most prominent Figure. In the opening vision He declares Himself to be the First and the Last, the Living One: "I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades." No words could more definitely set forth His triumph. Having won the mastery of the heretofore unconquered enemies of man, He leads Captivity itself captive. By His death He loosed us from our sins, and of His will He created His people into a kingdom; and in the song of the Living Creatures and the Elders it is said: "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth."

The glory of Christ is represented in these visions as coming from His death. Twenty-nine times in the book He is spoken of as the "Lamb,"—the figure being taken either from the paschal lamb, or from Isaiah's vision of the lamb brought to the slaughter, in which latter sense it was used by John the Baptist when declaring Jesus to be the "Lamb of God." The "Lamb" is nearly always spoken of "as though it had been slain": either standing

The Sacrifice
of Christ
radiant with
glory.

Y

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prepared for the sacrifice, or as having made the sacrifice. Nowhere does the fact of Christ's death pass out of sight. Its vital significance dominates the mention of His Name. "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain," sang the thousands of angels; and all creation made response, "Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever." He is "the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world"; the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, with the firstfruits redeemed from among men; the Lamb that shall be the Shepherd of the unnumbered multitude, who have washed their robes and made them white in His blood. Unlike the Jerusalem of earth, "where their Lord was crucified," in the Holy City above there shall be no Temple: "the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof"; nor shall there be need of the light of the sun or moon or stars, "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb"; nor shall there enter in anything that is unclean, "but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." There in the presence of the Eternal One shall they reign and rejoice who have overcome sin by the blood of the Lamb. "Blessed," said the

angel-spirit, "are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb,"—to that triumph when the Redeemer and the redeemed, the heavenly Bridegroom and the earthly Bride, shall come home! Then shall be sung "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

In this book Christ is once called the "Word of God," and once the "Son of God," though He Himself three times speaks of God as "my Father," and twice God is referred to as "his Father." He calls Himself "the beginning of the creation of God," and the Seven Spirits of God are said to be His eyes, or in His hand. To Him is offered the same adoration and worship which are given to the Father; and at times the writer identifies Him in such a way with the Father as to speak of Them as one.

The Deity of Christ.

But perhaps the most glorious vision in the book, and all the more glorious if contrasted with the scene at Calvary, is that in which Christ, the Word of God, is presented as the Captain of the armies of heaven. At the head of the host going forth to fight the last battle against sin, He rides upon a white horse, His eyes flashing fire, on His head diadems of power, and over His armour a garment sprinkled with blood, or, as some authorities

The Vision of Christ as Victor:
Rev. xix. 11-16.

read, dipped in blood. No longer is He thought of as gentle and peaceful, but as a stern warrior and an inflexible judge—the princely knight, to vindicate truth, and to avenge error, as mediæval poets loved to picture Him. He brings with Him the sharp sword and the rod of iron, for now must He smite and break the power that so long has held in bondage souls for whom He died. “And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords !”

As we read these lines, our thoughts revert to an earlier vision, in which the writer speaks of the great voices in heaven, echoes of which seem to live in Handel’s sublime and mighty tones, singing and shouting the tidings of the last victory : “The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ : and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Rev. xi. 15.

The Apocalypse one of the most precious books of Sacred Scripture.

The Apocalypse is indeed full of difficulties, and labour, ingenuity, and devotion have been expended lavishly and eagerly in its interpretation, but with little satisfaction and less conclusiveness. Not infrequently its study has resulted in the creation of morbid hopes and distressing fears ; and in its strange, labyrinthine style and thought some earnest folk have lost their faith and themselves. And yet,

on the other hand, as one wanders on through the wilderness of metaphor and allusion, not knowing what to make out of it all, ever and anon it happens, at unexpected turns, that one is brought face to face with visions and pictures of rarest beauty and most delightful simplicity, that for comfort and assurance are unequalled elsewhere in Sacred Scripture. Be this as it may, the testimony of the book to contemporary conditions is beyond question of inestimable value. Suppose the book to be a dream from beginning to end, and that the dream baffles understanding, still the book sets forth the fact that in very early times there existed a firm and splendid faith, indeed a conviction, in the final triumph of righteousness over sin, in the efficacy of the Passion and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and in the unity of the Father and the Son in the one Nature, in the redemption of the world, and in the reception of the worship offered by believers.

It will be observed that neither in the Gospels nor in the Apocalypse is any intimation given as to the way in which the benefits of Christ's death are applied to the individual. The former simply state the facts of the Sacrifice, and the latter presents some of the results

How does the Sacrifice avail the believer?

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which came therefrom ; but neither affords any theory of atonement or reconciliation. Yet it is impossible to avoid asking, How does the individual appropriate the efficacy of the Death of Christ to Himself ? This is the practical, rather than the historical, side of the question of the Passion. Earlier in this study we avoided theories of propitiation and of penalties and punishments, not only because such theories seemed derogatory to God the Father, but also because by many minds such theories are difficult of acceptance, and are regarded as unnecessary, perhaps even repulsive. Efforts to explain mysteries by propounding hypotheses involving greater mysteries, do not help towards either an intelligent or a spiritual apprehension of truth. Some people they lead to weariness and acquiescence, and others to rejection and unbelief. Acquiescence of this sort and unbelief are well nigh the same thing : if there is any difference, it is rather in favour of unbelief. We have therefore waived the consideration of the Godward aspect of the Passion, not because there is no such aspect, or that it is from the human point of view of slight importance, but because we know scarcely anything about it, and have no desire to interpret inferences as certainties. We do not deny that some have found comfort, and

even strength, in the theories which others regard as unreasonable, but no theories or speculations should be considered as essential to or part of the truth. Nor does it follow that because a theory or practice has been helpful in some instances, it is therefore true. Even the ancient and the Pagan theories of sacrifice were not without benefit to some who held them ; but that is no evidence that the theories were of God, or belonged to man's best conceptions of religion. Speculations are inevitable : possibly necessary, so that a working hypothesis may be obtained, but they must not be taken for more than they are worth. The clear and distinct fact before us is, that Christ suffered and died. Even the view upon which we have insisted, that He died unto sin, must not be considered as more than an attempt to explain the motive of His death, and by no means a complete explanation of that motive. As a theory it seems less objectionable and more plausible than other theories, but the fact of the Sacrifice remains unaffected by it. If, however, we accept the theory, supported as it is by St. Paul, the question still confronts us, How does the individual benefit by that Death unto sin ?

Cf. pp. 55,
125.

No one doubts that he does benefit, and it is well to set the two facts definitely in view,—

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No dispute
can be main-
tained against
the fact of
benefits.

Christ died, and man has been helped thereby. The world is not indeed regenerated, nor are the desires and passions of humanity other in kind than what they have always been ; but the world is better than it was before He died, and man's evil qualities are more under restraint. This has not been the effect of civilization irrespective of religion. It may be doubted if civilization to-day is in any important particular much improvement on the civilization which existed among some peoples centuries and even millenniums before the Christian era. Mechanical contrivances have made life easier, but they have not added to its happiness. The ancient Egyptians had as much joy in life as have the most joyful of modern nations ; and for business enterprise, law, administration, and other qualities which are supposed to distinguish European countries to-day, the Assyrian, Roman, Greek, and Phœnician do not suffer in comparison. If the world has been bettered morally, so that kindlier feelings prevail between man and man, life become more sacred, women and children more highly respected, and sensualism a thing to be ashamed of, it has been because of the coming among men of a spirit which former ages had not,—a spirit represented by the Cross which on hill and tower, by riverside and

highway, on the crowns of kings, on altars, robes, vessels of the sanctuary, and walls of the home, everywhere, from the Uralians to the Atlantic, and from Lapland to Gibraltar, and now in continents beyond the seas, told of the Great Sacrifice and the Death unto sin. Men were taught that the thing which brought Christ to Calvary, and vented on Him its terrific and malignant strength, was a thing to be shunned. The evil it did to Him, it might do to them,—greater evil, indeed, for sin which caused Him only pain and sorrow, might cost man his eternal welfare. Suffering, again, produced other emotions both in the one enduring and in those beholding its ravages, since He had suffered. To heal wounds became a nobler vocation than to make wounds, to comfort the sick and dying, more natural than to leave them to perish. There were slums in ancient cities, full of degradation and misery, utterly neglected ; but, under the influence of the Cross, in the midst of poverty, were built hospitals for the infirm, refuges for the friendless, and schools for the ignorant. The effort to clean or destroy these festering corners of cities goes on ceaselessly. None may be allowed to lapse back again ; not only because of the injury done to the community by wretchedness and low morals, but also be-

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cause the soul of every human being is precious to Him who for that soul suffered the vengeance of sin, even to death.

The power of
Life comes out
of Christ's
Death.

It was not the doctrine or precepts of Christ which led to this transformation of society. In many particulars the teachings of Buddha and Confucius are not unworthy of being placed beside some of His utterances ; but they effected no such changes among the people who received them. Even the life of Christ, so inspiring and so beautiful, by itself influenced the world but slightly. The world has always had more good examples than it could follow. But no death ever impressed the world more deeply and more lastingly than did the death of Christ. It still commands attention. From it lessons of various import are still being drawn. Even they who set aside its theological significance, perhaps question its verity, cannot dispute the fact that the centuries of faith and teaching concerning it have had a stupendous influence on the world. Society may not be what it should be ; evil is mighty and wrongs are common ; but society is, and has been since the uplifting of the Cross, entertaining more exalted ideals, and working on to nobler purposes.

This improvement in the world differs, however, from the change which occurs in the

individual, in that the world is less self-conscious, and knows nothing of ecstasy and absorption. To the believer the change is as from death unto life. Dead in trespasses and sins, he is raised by the power of the Cross, not as Lazarus was brought back, to die again, but as Christ, to die no more, so that he is said to be risen with Christ. Somewhere or other, this transformation in the experiences of men and women is going on all the time. The processes, like the processes of life, are not always to be discerned ; given stages may be more easily marked, and the fruits or results cannot be overlooked. No surer evidence of the truth and power of Christ can there be than these consequences of faith, trust, devotion, and fellowship. Men who had grown into sin, until conscience, seared as with a hot iron, had lost its power ; others, who had made sorrow a habit, and who discovered in the conditions and events of life nothing but increase of grief and fresh reason for rebellion against God ; and others again, whose vision and judgement had been so perverted that they saw good in no one, turned every blessing into sin, brought wrong out of right and evil out of purity, and so misinterpreted life as to make it appear undesirable,—such as these, types common and well known, are among those

The alteration wrought in the individual by the Sacrifice unlike that wrought in the world.

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saved from their sins by the Sacrifice of Christ. In some the change is instantaneous, like unto the rescue of a drowning man from the water ; in most cases, the translation is slow as is the growth of trees or the acquirement of knowledge. But it is undeniable : as are the ensuing peace, joy, thankfulness, and pure and cheery conduct.

The Christian never fails to acknowledge the debt he owes to his Lord and Saviour.

If enquiry be made into these conversions and developments, invariably the individual will be found to ascribe his salvation to the Divine Sacrifice. He may not express himself in exact terms, but he is sure to speak of the Cross of Jesus, and of its power over him. This is as true, say, of the peasant in Bohemia or the Tyrol, kneeling before the crucifix by the side of the road, as of the outcast brought into a mission room where no symbol exists. It is as true of the refined and scholarly as of the rude and unlettered. Nor among those who from childhood have been nurtured and instructed in the Christian life, if they realize their privileges, will there be any difference of opinion. All experience turns to the Cross. In some it may be more vivid than in others, perhaps owing to temperament, but the fact remains. Time does not modify it. In the early days of Christianity it was as it is to-day. The same faith lived in men as far from each

other in time and condition as Ignatius, Augustine of Hippo, Francis of Assisi, Thomas à Kempis, John Bradford, Thomas Ken, John Wesley, John Henry Newman, and John Iliytch Sergieff. These, and a vast company of others, great and true as they, preaching Christ crucified, by the power of the Cross led out of darkness into light, and out of sin into holiness, unnumbered multitudes of children of earth.

There can be, consequently, as we have affirmed, no question of the benefits coming from the Great Sacrifice. But the fact does not account for itself. It does not enable us to understand how the benefits are conveyed to the individual. We have been dealing with effects, rather than with efficient causes. What is there in Christ's death unto sin that enables the believer to live unto God?

How does man secure these advantages?

We have maintained already that the means whereby we avail ourselves of the benefits of the Sacrifice is faith, and we have pointed out more or less clearly what this faith induces us to do; but faith must have in it some object and some reason. Otherwise it might exercise itself upon an absurdity. The question of what we are to believe rarely becomes more importunate than in the subject now before us. We have intimated much that we have no need to

The object and purpose of faith, of first importance.

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Cf. p. 125.

believe, perhaps much that without violating our sense of justice and appropriateness we cannot believe ; and we have suggested some aspects of the Sacrifice which make no such demands upon the impossible. Perhaps it will be said that we have yielded too much to the tendency of the times, or that, towards some widely held theories, we have maintained unnecessarily an agnostic or an indifferent position ; but there is no reason to believe that God having done so much for man's salvation would set that salvation out of the reach of many whose hearts and minds turn to Him in hope and confidence. Nor can we think that of the multitudes who have found peace and freedom in Him, their faith rested on theories they could not understand or accept. They must have believed something, and possibly not a few of them may have believed the theories now objected to, but others certainly did not ; for all through the Christian centuries these theories have been disputed, or, if not vigorously so, have been acquiesced in, not believingly, but merely formally, and that by people whose lives have displayed the joy of the Cross. Even when we denounce "heresy," if we are candid and impartial, we shall recognize that they who diverted themselves from the truth as the

Church has accepted it, were not lacking sincerity in their convictions or purity in their lives. That error may lead to viciousness of thought and conduct is not to be denied: it matters much what a man believes; but the eagerness with which the opponents of error have sometimes endeavoured to see that viciousness immediately illustrated in those who first fell into the error, is to be deprecated rather than imitated.

To believe that the Sacrifice happened, as a matter of history, may be a step in the right direction, but it does not help us to overcome sin. We may accept the traditions embodied in the Gospels in their entirety, just as they have come down to us, but that does not necessarily bring us to Christ, or enable us to correct error. It may have no more influence upon us than any other fact of history in which we are not immediately and personally concerned, On the other hand, we may accept no more than the fact that Christ died, and we may set aside as unhistorical, or at least as questionable, many of the particulars given concerning His death, and yet know Him to be our Lord and Saviour. So that without being a thing of indifference, the mere history is not of first consequence. Nor would the exhibition of suffering help us, other perhaps than in-

Accepting the historical fact of the Sacrifice, or lamenting its physical aspects, does not convey to the soul its efficacy.

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directly. Had John Howard suffered some of the tortures inflicted upon criminals in his day, and had his broken and dying body been shown to the prisoners whose lot he sought to better, though they may have pitied his misery and admired his devotion, their cells would have remained untouched and their condition would have been as before. We have said this elsewhere, but the temptation to dwell upon the physical sufferings of Jesus, as though salvation lay in them, is so common and so dangerous that we need ever to be on our guard against it. They were indeed evidences of His will and of His love, and so far they may tend to support our faith in that will and love, but they cannot be the end of faith.

Christ died,
not to save
man from
the effects
of sin, but
from sin
itself.

Nor can we believe that the sacrifice of Christ was intended to relieve us from the penalties and punishments of sin, for as a matter of fact the consequences of sin are never averted. It would have been as impossible for Christ to bear the guilt of other people's sins as it would be for us. The damage done to the character by sin is not to be removed by the supposition that some one else can bear its effects. If a man lies, the fact that he to whom the lie is told suffers deception does not lessen the operation of the

lie in the man who made it ; and no one else can experience or lessen that operation. Christ did not die to save the world from the punishment of sin, which is its natural result, but from sin itself. He would remove the cause of the suffering ; not simply take away the suffering, and leave the cause. In spiritual matters as in physical, the alleviation of the outcome of disease is of little use, except possibly as a means to an end. The disease itself must be taken away. And he who would have the pleasures of sin, and then shrink from bearing its results, adds cowardice to his other failings, and destroys the last vestiges of his manhood.

The faith that satisfies itself in the opinion that Christ's Sacrifice saves man from wrath and pain in another world is sinful in its selfishness. Few things have lowered spiritual life and injured Christianity more than the insistence upon the death of Christ as the means whereby to escape the sufferings of Gehenna. If the sinner is not saved from his sin, there is no way possible for him to get away from its consequences, either in this world or in that which is to come. Nothing can be more derogatory to the glory and honour of God than the supposition that He is concerned only in saving men from punish-

The selfishness of wishing by Christ's Sacrifice to escape the penalty of sin.

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ment. The punishment is a small part of it. And he who believes that Christ died simply to give him ease of body and joy of soul, so that he may have no torments, is thinking only of himself, and nothing of the enormity and heinousness of sin which both grieves God and ruins man. If, according to the ancient legend, man having sinned could no longer remain in the paradise of innocence and virtue, it is certain that continuing in sin, he cannot live in holiness.

"Hell," a
state, not of
physical
punishment,
but of
eternal sin.

This fact cannot be too earnestly insisted upon. The opinion that the pains of the future life are physical is largely responsible for this selfish desire to avoid the results of sin. With many people the dread of bodily suffering seems to outweigh any fear of mental or spiritual agony. Theologians and poets have dwelt much upon the horrors and woes which await the evil-doer, and these horrors and woes have been understood to be gross, and by the painters have been depicted in materialistic form. All the tortures of fire have been conjured up by the imagination to set forth the sufferings of the lost. The fear of such calamities has been supposed powerful enough to bring about a desire for moral reformation; and undoubtedly there are people who can be thus influenced for

good. But these conceptions of the place of torment have arisen from taking the figures and metaphors for the reality. The reality can be pictured only by such ; but the reality is more terrible than they. Christ did not die to save man from the piercing flames and unrelenting fury of material fire, but from that eternal sin, of the nature and ravages of which they are only figures.

Christ is said to have suffered *for us* : that is to say, not always or necessarily instead of us, but on account of us. He is the representative man, and what He did was done not so much to make it unnecessary for us to do anything, but to become an example of the way by which we too might overcome sin, and an assurance that, if we enter into fellowship with Him, we shall do as He did, die unto sin. His Sacrifice was not intended to take away the necessity of our sacrifice ; but to make our sacrifice possible. We have to be crucified with Him. His Passion is not only a proof of His love and obedience, but also of His power to lead men to the same Cross. The consciousness that we are one with Him, that we have the same desire to do God's will, to resist temptation, to work and fight for holiness, makes us strong. Grace comes from looking in faith to Him : and

The efficient
cause of our
salvation.

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that grace is divine and supernatural power, which, entering into us, gives to our will strength, and to our hope assurance;—not merely the favour of God, but virtue from God continuously poured into our hearts. We do not enquire into the hidden mystery of this grace : it simply enters into us, and accomplishes its purpose. In that Christ died unto sin, we know that the power which saved Him can save us. We plead to be delivered from the impulse and control of sin : to be brought near to God ; to have courage to trust in His forgiveness. By Christ's resistance unto death and by His conquest of sin, He inspires us to renewed effort in the day of trial and despondency. And the more we look to Him as He passes so triumphantly through the tribulation, and the more our faith fastens itself to Him as the Conqueror of sin, so much the more do we appreciate and appropriate the benefits He has won for us. Entering into close sympathy with Him, being made one with Him, we feel that we shall be saved from sin with Him and by Him ; and faith lifts up itself towards the throne of righteousness and love, and, though our thoughts and words and deeds are not what we would have them, and our sacrifice can never be perfect as was His Sacrifice, yet

we know that "we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings."

Art. XI. of the
XXXIX.

They who realize clearly the worthiness of Christ's Sacrifice and the unworthiness of their own sacrifice, in comparison, and also that what they have done, imperfect as it is, could not have been done but for Him,—He was the Warrior who really won the victory, in the results of which, rather than in its achievement, they have part,—will the more unreservedly acknowledge that their own works and deservings are of too little account to be reckoned in. The death-blow to sin was struck by Christ. Nor is it to be supposed that faith always keeps itself to this aspect of Christ's Sacrifice, or that faith always defines its object as distinctly. There are mysteries in the sacrifice, Godward at least, beyond any that we have suggested, that we know little or nothing of, the influence of which has an importance as great as any that we have considered. But faith concentrating itself, perhaps confusedly in thought, but none the less really in act, upon the Person of Christ, enables the soul to appropriate the benefits of His Sacrifice. When we say "appropriate" we must be careful not to exclude the fact

However
vague in
definition faith
may be at
times, if it
have life,
it turns ever
to Christ.

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that Divine grace makes those benefits possible to the individual. Man must receive, but he cannot receive unless the thing to be received is given; and the glory ever abides with the giver. Seeing his faith, however, God bestows on the believer both the blessing and the power to take the blessing; and the believer uses the power and accepts the blessing.

The repudiation of sin the first outcome of salvation.

But while faith is the means whereby the individual lays hold of the salvation offered him, the immediate result of the contemplation of the Sacrifice is abhorrence of sin. To recall the events of the Passion, even though, as we have said, the details given may sometimes rest on evidence rather presumptive than conclusive, is to create a feeling of repugnance against the evil which led to the death of Christ, and a sense of shame that man could have been brought to commit so great a wrong. This effect is not lessened by attributing the crime to the people who secured the condemnation and nailed the Victim to the Cross. Under the like conditions others would do as they did: and the conditions, as well as the readiness to fall in with the conditions, had their cause in that moral disorder, that infection of nature, that depravity and corruption in-

herited from the progenitors of the race. The presence and activity of this disease makes possible deeds such as that done to Christ at Calvary. In some it may not produce effects so gross and palpable as in others, just as physical disease works diversely, but its loathsomeness consists not simply in its potentialities, but in its very nature. Let man but bring himself near to the holiness of God, and he will perceive the repulsiveness and filth of this inborn sin. All the more dreadful does it appear when he remembers that it was both the cause and the means of the death of Christ.

From very early times attempts have been made to account for the presence in man of this defection. The best known of these efforts is that given in the Book of Genesis, probably derived from Babylonian sources. Strongly impressed with the fact of sin, and feeling that sin, though powerful and fruitful in man, is yet extraneous to his nature, the ancient writer represents man as having been created in moral innocence and ignorance, and as having been brought down from his pristine purity by the temptation of a serpent. Whether intended as history or poetry, the tradition maintains the theory of a fall from righteousness into its opposite. It is difficult to see how righteousness, if it be an active energy rather than a

An ancient story describing the coming of sin into the world.

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mere passive quality, could exist where there was no knowledge either of it or of its antithesis; or how it could be without that antithesis. It is still more difficult either to accept the assumption of man's original innocence, or to discern the justice and mercy in withholding from man the knowledge of good and evil, and making him responsible for a lapse which was inevitable. But this ancient attempt to explain the coming of sin into the world has led to conclusions far more arduous to accept than these.

Sin is said to be the cause of physical death.

Thus it has been held that Adam's disobedience brought about physical death,—that had Adam not sinned no man had ever died. Some have even supposed that all death is due to him; the death of trees, birds, stars, and all created things. According to the tradition, the woman interpreted physical death to be the penalty, but that she misunderstood the threat was pointed out to her by the serpent, and was made plain by the fact that neither she nor her husband died at the time, and not till long after. How the woman came to know death, when so far none had died, is not told; nor is there in the tradition any suggestion that physical death came into the world because of sin. It is true that the Council of Carthage, in A.D. 412, condemned

Cœlestius for maintaining, besides other heresies which he had adopted from Pelagius, that Adam would have died, whether he had sinned or not ; but it can hardly be supposed that the fathers present at that Council had reached any greater proficiency in the investigation of the laws of nature than has been attained these centuries since. The Babylonian poet was wiser than they. The provision made for the continuance of the race was sufficient evidence that organisms would weaken and cease to fulfil their functions.

It has also been held that in Adam the whole human race sinned,—that is to say, taking it for granted that the whole human race came from a single progenitor, from “the man” : that we were in him, and therefore, having had part in his act, we share in the guilt of that act. In vain do we seek for such an appalling conclusion in the story given in Genesis. Not only does the writer avoid speaking of moral consequences, but he expressly describes the consequences as distinctly physical. This is the more significant because he implies that the death threatened was not physical. Indeed, rather than tracing moral degradation to the act of Adam and Eve, he ascribes to it physical toil and sorrow. Possibly these may be considered by some as moral evils, or as means to

Moral consequences sometimes supposed to ensue from Adam's transgression.

such ; but if these are the effects of sin, then to sin also must be ascribed the health and strength to labour, the wisdom to devise and the skill to execute, the fruitful soil, and the provisions of nature which can only be obtained by effort. Nor does it appear reasonable or just to regard all men born into the world since Adam's time as having been actually participant in his sin or as responsible for it. No one knows whether any other man would have committed that sin had he been in Adam's place. It is possible that some men would have resisted and refused compliance with a temptation so simple and direct. At all events there is no evidence that guilt has been assigned by God to those who personally had nothing to do with the sin. Suffering indeed may, and frequently does, come to the innocent from some one else's sin ; but the guilt must necessarily belong to him who is guilty. To say that the new-born babe is to be condemned for a sin done thousands of years ago by a weak woman and a still weaker man, or by anybody else for that matter, is contrary to common sense, and can only be made to appear plausible by travesties of Biblical interpretation. The prophet Ezekiel struck the true principle of justice, when he said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son

shall not bear the iniquity of the father, Ezek. xviii. 20.
neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the
son : the righteousness of the righteous shall
be upon him, and the wickedness of the
wicked shall be upon him."

Though it has coloured the phraseology
both of Sacred Scripture to some extent, and
of theology since Apostolic times to a much
greater extent, and, by its apparently easy way
of settling a perplexing question and its poetical
beauty, has for ages sustained its popularity,
the tradition given in Genesis makes a daring
assumption in affirming man's original sin-
lessness. Possibly the assumption is not
defenceless, for it has received almost universal
favour for many centuries ; but, without assent-
ing thereto or differing therefrom, in other
words, leaving its consideration out of the
question, it is at least permissible to wonder
how any intelligent and moral being can
be good if bereft of the power of doing
wrong. He who can keep a law certainly
has a choice of not keeping it ; else in what
does he differ from an incapable and there-
fore irresponsible creature ? Even in heaven
itself it is said there were angels who kept
not their first estate. The absence of the
power to sin may imply righteousness, but
it is a righteousness negative, helpless, and

Has there
ever been an
age of inno-
cence ?

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of no moral value. So that it may be, that from the moment man became conscious of the possession of moral qualities, sin was with him as well as holiness, and that the battle lay between the two, the latter indeed being made mighty in the resistance presented to the former. Possibly there never was a time in the history of man when evil did not beset him: when the inclination to follow his own will was not stronger than the desire to obey God's will. And possibly, too, man was created for the purpose of securing the final victory over sin, the banishment of evil from the universe, and the absorption of all things in God. No one knows; but the theory that God ordained, or even permitted, the fall of man in order that He might save him, does not seem easy of belief. Nor is it less difficult to accept the supposition; that if man were created in innocence and endowed with free will, without which his innocence would be no more than the innocence of a tree or a bird, God could have hindered the fall. Where there is no choice of action, there can be no responsibility; and only by taking away the freedom of choice could God have intervened.

It should be observed that the tradition of the fall given in the Genesis is not referred

to elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, and in the New Testament only in the writings of St. Paul. Even the name "Adam" occurs in the New Testament outside of St. Paul's Epistles but twice, once in a genealogy, and once in the Epistle of St. Jude. Outside of Genesis it appears in Deuteronomy and Job. This is strange, considering the importance of the man and the consequences of the act. Except by St. Paul both the man and the act were left unnoticed. The Apostle to the Gentiles, however, having been brought up in the rabbinical schools, accepted the tradition as historical. He interprets it freely as describing the origin of sin in man, and holds that from sin came death. "Death," he says, "reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." And again, "As through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all have sinned." He regards Adam as the figure of Him that was to come. The one was made a living soul; the other, a quickening life-giving spirit. The one fell into sin; the other resisted sin. Therefore, "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all

The story of Genesis unique in the Old Testament, and alluded to in the New Testament only by St. Paul.

Rom. v. 14.

Rom. v. 12.

1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

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2 Cor. xi. 3 ;
1 Tim. ii. 14.

be made alive." It is curious that St. Paul attributes the blame to Eve rather than to Adam : "the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" ; "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived hath fallen into the transgression." The tradition says that she gave to her husband, and he did eat. One would infer from this that the man did not need persuasion. He simply fell. Evidently his innocence was more easily overcome than the woman's.

Has St. Paul
been rightly
understood ?

Acts v. 34 ;
xxii. 3.

Gal. i. 14.

The acceptance by St. Paul of the story in Genesis, and the deductions he made from it, necessarily had a wide and lasting influence. Unlike our Lord, whose religious training seems to have been in a freer atmosphere, St. Paul had been educated as a Pharisee. He knew thoroughly the law of the fathers and the traditions of the elders, having been taught therein by Gamaliel, a Pharisee, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and, later, by the Jews glorified as one of their most celebrated teachers. Few of Gamaliel's disciples excelled in proficiency and earnestness the youth from Tarsus. "I advanced," he says, "in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." His conversion to Christianity

did not take away or dull his scholastic attainments ; indeed, in this respect, his change of faith did little more than give him a new theory of interpretation. He saw the knowledge he had acquired in a fresh light ; and in that fresh light he brought out to the enrichment and explanation of Christianity an acquaintance with the Old Testament books that no other apostle seems to have had. He writes his Epistles with the ancient Scriptures before him, and from those Scriptures he draws illustrations and inferences, and as it suits his purpose turns history into allegory, and reads Christian doctrine into old revelations. Naturally, therefore, we should expect him to accept the story of the fall of man as the rabbis of his day accepted it ; and yet it would be difficult to determine whether St. Paul uses the tradition as actual fact, or as a familiar story, unhistorical in itself, and yet capable of illustrating certain truths. It is possible, too, that our interpretation of St. Paul has been made for us by men such as St. Augustine and John Calvin, who carried what they thought his doctrine to those conclusions which bear their name, but which to many minds now appear unwarranted. Neither here nor elsewhere in his Epistles may St. Paul have meant exactly that which he has been said to mean, particularly by those who have

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endeavoured to make his words fit their theory. Should it, however, turn out that, following the teaching of his masters, St. Paul adopted the conclusion that the story in Genesis was neither allegory nor poetry, but veritable history, and should he have read it, not as merely accounting for the presence of sin in the world, but as describing its actual coming, his authority must be set against any opinions to the contrary, and, though the authority may not be regarded as infallible, the fate of the opinions goes without saying. Infallible of course St. Paul was no more likely to be in matters of history and interpretation, than he was in the one illustration he drew from the natural world when he described a wild olive as grafted on a cultivated olive.

No one can reasonably question the fact that sin is in the world.

But no matter how the disease or infirmity of sin came, there is no doubt that it enters with life itself into every child of earth. The origin is of small moment, beside the fact. The latter is ever evident. The newly born babe needs but time and opportunity to show that it is not immaculate. It may die without having actually sinned, but like a seed the faculty of sin, with other faculties, lay within waiting for a chance to develop. Not even the waters of Baptism can heal or remove the malady. "And this infection of nature

Art. IX.

doth remain," as one of the XXXIX. Articles reminds us, "yea, even in them that are regenerated"; and though it has not so operated, as the Calvinists taught, that no spark of moral goodness is left in man, that he has become utterly and totally depraved, yet because of it, "man is very far gone from original righteousness and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and therefore, in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." It should be carefully observed that, though this Article implies that man was created innocent and guileless, it does not affirm the *guilt* of man because of the presence in him of moral infirmity. Guilt there cannot be, nor can punishment be incurred, until some act of sin is committed. The subject of the Divine displeasure and condemnation is not the individual, but the disease that possesses him. God cannot look with favour on that which is injuring His creation.

Ever and anon this *φρονημα σαρκος* breaks out, as physical weakness does, and the result is expressed in acts that cannot be regarded as other than wrong in themselves, and, if done knowingly, wrong in him who does them. To deal with the acts one by one

Sin sure to
manifest itself.

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is like treating severally the infirmities which affect the body : only less hopefully, because in morals nothing done actually eradicates the source and origin of the trouble. Cure it in one direction, and it appears in another. Discipline may repress outbreaks, but relax vigilance and the disease is as bad as ever. It is this which fills the soul with alarm, and even with terror, when the mind dwells upon the Passion of Christ. That which was so repulsive to Him becomes repulsive to those who would be one with Him. At the same time, the thought of the Passion imparts encouragement to the believer : for Christ points out the way, and indeed conveys grace, whereby the disease may be brought under control and finally be driven away. Hence the figures used in Scripture of the healing power of His Sacrifice. He is the Physician : with His blood He not only washes and cleanses the wounds of sin, but purifies the whole being of man. If we may so put it, the rays or virtues of the Cross penetrate the inmost recesses of the believer's soul, and affect every spring of thought and action. So that if the magnitude of the disease be brought out, no less, but rather more, is displayed the efficacy of the remedy.

But the inheritance which has come to man from his fathers, though it occasions him great evil and leads him into doing shameful deeds, bringing retribution upon him, and therefore is hateful and deplorable, does not in itself involve him in guilt. Man cannot be blamed for that which he cannot help, even though it injures him. It is not of his will and accord that he is brought into the world. He does not ask for life, or by any act of his own will accept its obligations and infirmities, but in his birth has had forced upon him responsibilities, sorrows, and labours; and the way he deals with them will be to his honour or to his discredit: but he cannot be regarded guilty of incurring a disease which was born with him. It is his misfortune, but not his fault. It may kill him, as inherited infirmities may take away his physical life, but he cannot be condemned for it. Only, knowing that the seed of the leprosy is there, it becomes his duty to guard against its possibilities of outbreak and mastery.

Man is not responsible for the evil which he has inherited.

Personal responsibility lies in the performance of that duty. It is not the fault of the shipmaster that the storm comes or that the shore is dangerous, but if he fails to do what can be done he is answerable for the consequences. The tendency to evil must be

Where personal responsibility begins.

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striven against : whether that tendency be in reference to things physical or moral. The effort may not always succeed, but if it be honestly and earnestly made it frees him who makes it, if not from all its effects, at least from the guilt of the evil incurred. Sin abides with him who lets himself alone ; and the sin is the greater because means have been provided whereby the disease in man may be counteracted and brought within control. In the wilderness, if the people refused to look at the brazen serpent, they not only died from the bite of the scorpion, but they also sinned in neglecting the means of healing. So our Blessed Lord said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The remedy against moral infirmity is the Sacrifice of Christ : first, in that the realization of the causes that led to that Sacrifice awakens within us the desire to struggle against those causes ; secondly, the example of perseverance, courage, determination, and hope set us by Christ gives us encouragement and strength ; and thirdly, through faith in Him and in what He has done, He imparts grace and power whereby we are saved both from

John iii. 14, 15.

the disease of inherited sin and also from the guilt of personal sin.

The sin of all sins, therefore, is the rejection of Christ,—the refusal to accept the gift whereby we can carry out our responsibility. Hence the stress laid upon the significance and importance of the Passion of our Divine Redeemer. It is not to be supposed, however, that without conscious apprehension of the benefits He gives thereby, the evil that is in us cannot be brought under control. That would be to rule out of hope, not only the good and noble men and women who have lived in heathen lands and ages, but also the like men and women who lived in Israel before the coming of Christ. It may be said that grace was given them in anticipation of the Great Sacrifice ; and the conjecture can be neither confirmed nor refused, seeing that we do not know the purposes of Deity. But it is simpler to assume that the grace given them was of the same love that gave Jesus to the world : both the latter gift and the former being related to each other chiefly in that they came from the one Source of all good. Be this as it may, we have no right to think of God's love as limited to any one race or age. He may have chosen Israel for a certain purpose, and when that purpose was accom-

Knowledge on the part of the recipient not necessary to the efficacy of the Sacrifice in his life.

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plished He may have set Israel aside, or have changed Israel into a spiritual kingdom, in which should be gathered the children born, not of the flesh, but of God. But the devout Egyptian and Babylonian, the temple-loving and deity-worshipping Greek and Latin, were as much His people and the objects of His affection as was the race descended from Abraham. Among them were many as fully aware of the evil of sin, and as determined to suppress its ravages in their lives, as others have been in later ages and in more favourable circumstances. None of these had any conscious apprehension of the work of Christ: none, indeed, had any knowledge whatever of Him.

Even in these days the struggle towards Christ oftentimes goes on without knowledge of Christ.

So it is among non-Christian peoples to-day. Some may never have heard of Jesus Christ, or He may have been presented to them in such guise that they could not accept Him, without doing violence either to their intelligence or to their sense of propriety, and yet they may have striven hard after virtue and righteousness. Probably we should find among the heathen many whose standard and realization of morality are higher than in some parts of Christendom. There may be Pagans whose conception of God is loftier and more spiritual than that entertained by

many Jews or Christians. These instances may be exceptional, but they go to sustain the theory that people who know not Christ are still within the love and providence of the Almighty, and suggest the possibility that in some way or other the merits of the Redeemer affect them in the counsels of God. Indeed, the genius of Christianity is not so much to displace whatever truth or right that Paganism or other religions may possess, as to supplement and strengthen such truth and right, to impart to them deeper significance, to set them in due and proper relation to other principles, and to proclaim a grace which accepted shall enable their adherents the better to attain to those ideals of morality which they profess.

But while some control and even suppression of the moral disorder are possible without a knowledge of Christ, experience and observation show that the control and suppression are obtained mostly by the destruction of the means of sin, by asceticism, by keeping out of the way of temptation, and by retreating as far as possible from the world: and so far so good. Praiseworthy indeed is the effort not to give the malady a chance to express itself. But no change is wrought in the disorder itself. In that endeavour is made, guilt is

In the effectual conquest of sin no means are successful except the Sacrifice of Christ.

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avoided ; but the nature, in itself unholy, remains estranged from the holiness of God. The impurity may not break out, but it is still there. On the other hand, the redemption wrought by Christ affects not merely the outbreak, but the disease itself. Great and good as they may have become who have wrought without the help of Christ, much greater and much better would they have been had they realized the efficacy of His Sacrifice. Hence the sin of those who do know, and yet refuse to avail themselves of His grace. Responsibility beyond all dispute rests upon such as these. The nearer one gets to the Cross, and the deeper the impression made on the heart and mind by the sufferings and death of Christ, the weaker becomes the moral sickness and the less virulent and frequent the actual sins. With Him as our Saviour it is not necessary to go out of the world to avoid the sins of the world. The tendencies and passions of our nature which are so easily exaggerated and directed into wrong, may by His grace, not only be consecrated so as to serve their divinely appointed purpose, but made helps to that holiness and purity which the believer desires. The very force and impetuosity in them can be directed to good. The best Christians are not made out of characterless

people, that is to say, people who have neither energy nor temptation to do either wrong or right, simply negatives, but out of those who have power, strength, determination. If they sin, they sin mightily. The acceptance of Christ does not reduce the energy, or in any way curb it except to guide it in the opposite direction. He who could do great evil, comes to do great good.

Repentance and faith, then, are the effects of the Sacrifice of Christ, and also the means of appropriating the benefits secured by that Sacrifice. He who realizes the cause, the meaning, and the verity of the Sacrifice will be led by that realization to break with sin and to believe in the Saviour ; and by doing so, to him will come salvation. It will be said, that no man is able to attain to this experience without the grace of God giving him both the desire and the power. So one of the XXXIX. Articles affirms : " The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God : wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."

God creates in us the aspiration for holiness.

Art. X.

The contro-
versy on man's
free will.

Many Councils
condemned the
heresy of
Pelagius, and
repudiated the
possibility of
man turning
to God without
first receiving
Divine grace,
e.g. Orange,
529. See
Landon's
*Manual of
Councils*, ii. 4.

The reader scarcely needs be reminded that the doctrine herein expressed has been a subject of controversy from the days of Tertullian, Origen, and St. Augustine; and that no statement or definition of it has ever received and retained universal assent. But, unless we would go back of experience, and, falling into the error of Pelagius, hold that man may be without sin and keep the commandments of God, if he will,—that is to say, unless we are ready to maintain with Cœlestius that “Our victory proceeds not from the help of God but from the freedom of the will”—we must recognize the truth that lies behind the formulary. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the fact that St. Thomas Aquinas repudiated the idea that man can turn to good of his own will, the Council of Trent divided on the subject, condemning, on the one hand, those who said that, “since the sin of Adam free will is lost,” and, on the other hand, those who said that “a man may believe, love, hope, or repent, without the prevention or assistance of the Holy Spirit”:—which suggests the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of deciding the question. Practically, however, without Divine help it is not possible for man to free his will, warped and led captive by evil spirits and his own bad pro-

pensities. It is as hopeless as it would be for one to try to lift one's self out of deep water without something to hold to or be supported by. Only with man in sin, finding the present gratifying to the senses or the inclinations, and stupefied by its persuasive visions, he forgets the possibilities of the future, and has no desire for liberty. No matter what the origin of evil, its enervating, enslaving, deadening power is not to be denied. The question is not whether they who are within its grasp can do anything: the fact is they do not wish to do anything. Hence the help given by God to His unfortunate child. The necessary grace comes from God's sovereign mercy. Beside the evil, to counteract it, appears the longing for better things, and the will to do better things. How God imparts that help is past finding out. Why He should give it to some and not to others, we know not. We do not even know that He withholds it from any one: it may be, that He gives it to all, and that of their own will and decision one man uses it and another man rejects it. For us this problem has no solution. We cannot discover the mind of God, or judge of His justice; nor can we tell the processes in any mind outside of ourselves, and perhaps only vaguely in

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ourselves. But the fact remains, that without the gift of God we cannot realize the significance of the Passion of our Divine Redeemer.

Without
freedom of
will, can there
be responsi-
bility?

This problem of free will has led to speculation as to the extent of the application of Christ's Sacrifice, and of man's responsibility. If man by nature has no will or even inclination to accept the benefit of Christ's death, and God withholds from him the power to will or to desire those benefits, he can scarcely be held accountable for not doing that which he has no power so much as to wish to do. Opinion divides upon the assumption that there are such; and it is impossible to affirm the correctness of opinion either way. But if God has determined that some of His children shall not have freedom of will to give up sin and to believe in Christ, it follows that for such at least the Great Sacrifice had no purpose or grace. It was not intended that they should benefit by that Sacrifice. They are in helpless and irremediable plight. They remain in a state involving them more and more in sin, from which they have no desire, and of themselves can have no desire, to free themselves. In them the disease is left to work out its destiny and to end in death. The difficulty in admitting such conclusions is to discover in them evi-

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dences of the justice of God; and a still greater difficulty lies in reconciling such conclusions with the infinite love displayed both by the Father in giving up the Son to death, and by the Son in dying to save man from sin. How could it be said that God loved the world when He purposely kept from some of His children the impulse or volition to receive the outcome of that love?

And yet the difficulties may not be dismissed thus summarily. For experience comes in on the other side. They who have found grace, and have accepted the redemption of Jesus Christ, and are therefore rejoicing in His holy comfort, will declare without qualification that it was God who called them, who gave them the wish and the power to hear, to believe, and to obey, who made them what they are. They have no hesitation in ascribing all the glory to Him. He sought and found them. They were led by His Spirit. There was a compulsion that overruled and outwrought their own desires—the constraining power of the love of Christ. Without Him they could have done nothing. Christian people universally regard these as facts. It would be next to impossible to find a Christian who would claim that he had of himself determined to draw near to the Cross of

Prevenient
grace, how-
ever, necessary
to faith.

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John vi. 44. 65. Christ. "No man can come to me," the Lord Jesus said, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him,"—"except it be given unto him of my Father."

The question has to be left unsettled.

There is little hope that human ingenuity will succeed in reconciling these conclusions to the satisfaction of those who have either differentiated them, or have adopted vigorously one or other of them. Perhaps in view, not only of this apparent hopelessness, but also of the truth that the Judge of all the earth will do right, it may be thought that speculation should never have been indulged in; but speculation was inevitable, so soon as the question of free will came in.

Another unnecessary speculation.

So it has been asked, If Christ died to save man individually or socially? That is to say, did Christ in His Sacrifice regard each man by himself as separate from his fellows, or the society, nation, or class in which man has been gathered with his fellows? Modern life has a tendency to ignore the individual, and to turn its thought and its efforts to the community. In the community the individual is lost to sight and to distinction as is a drop of water immersed in the sea. So humanity, considered as the aggregation of human beings, is thought of as a whole; and to that whole every particular is subordinate and in com-

parison insignificant. Christ has no care for the particular soul, but gives His life for the salvation of the whole—in which salvation, of course, the particular soul profits, that is to say, incidentally. Thus altruism is set against egoism; the duty of thinking of and caring for others, rather than for one's self—a duty of indisputable obligation. But man cannot be thus definitely and decisively separated into parts. Society is of importance, but individuality is no less important. For individuality after all goes to the making up of society, and if the one is imperfect and faulty the other will be thereby affected. Indeed, society and the individual are dependent on each other; the former being less able to stand alone than the latter. It seems unfortunate, therefore, to make the distinction. Christ died for man, not in one but in every relation: both individually and collectively.

These speculations do not enter our mind at the time we are seeking either to gain or to renew our appreciation of the Sacrifice. Possibly as we become more assured of our relationship to God, they are of use as helps towards further discoveries in the mystery and expanse of Divine wisdom and love. Beyond an easily ascertainable point, enquiry has to use hypotheses and to make guesses; and often-

Our thankfulness should express itself in submission to God's will.

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times the hypotheses and guesses lead on to truth. On the other hand, experience or reflection may show them to be untenable and worthless ; and that discovery is a matter for thankfulness. We know what to avoid. At all events, setting theories aside, if we find ourselves so constrained by the love of Christ that the death at Calvary arouses within us the desire to get rid of sin, and to be made One with Him, we should thank God and give up ourselves to His guiding and strengthening grace. Nor should we think better of ourselves because He has so blessed us, but rather more of our greater need for blessing, and of His abundant loving-kindness.

The Disciples
had no visions
or theories :
only a bare
and sorrowful
fact.

These thoughts into which the study of Christ's Passion has led us, however interesting or helpful they may be to us, we may be well satisfied were not in the minds of the men who laid His body in the garden, or of the women who watched them and were gladdened by their devotion, or even of the Disciples who had been with Him in His tribulation. These people loved Him dearly, but their hope in Him was gone. The Sabbath eve was cheerless enough in their homes. He who spake as never other man spake, and

revealed mysteries that no one else could tell, and did deeds that none but He could do, lay dead. The sweet, pure life had ended. The light had gone out. There was nothing left. Perhaps some of them sat together and recalled utterances He had made,—the Kingdom that should be set up in peace and righteousness, more glorious than Solomon's; the restoration to Israel of the spirit that had given psalmists and prophets to their fathers; the rest for the weary, the joy for the sorrowful, the hope for little children. And the wonders that He wrought! They had never known a personality such as His. Indeed, it was unique in the history of the human race. But the vision had passed away; and there remained haunting the heart the tragedy of Calvary, the memory of a thorn-crowned Sufferer, the cries of the Cross. All was over. They wept. For them no future; for Israel no hope!

Jesus was dead!

But for the world, the Day was dawning; and in that Day there should be no death, and to that Day should come no night!

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